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**Changing British Attitudes  
to China and the Chinese,  
1928-1931**

**Thesis submitted  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Robert A. Bickers**

**School of Oriental and African Studies  
University of London  
1992**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the context and nature of British attitudes to China and the Chinese in the period 1928 to 1931, between the initial consolidation of the Nationalist Revolution in China and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. The relationship between official and popular levels of this discourse provides the dominant theme of this work. It is argued that these years saw the start of a major long-term shift in British attitudes prompted by the Nationalist Revolution and by changes in Britain's official policy towards China.

A wide range of official, institutional, and private primary and secondary material relating to Sino-British relations and to British treaty port life in China is examined in order to identify the sources, nature, and influence of British attitudes. The introduction surveys the existing literature on "attitudes" and "images" and outlines the limitations of traditionally textually-based approaches. Part 1 examines metropolitan and treaty port sources of British attitudes and their articulation and relates these to the structure and mores of British society in China, its socialisation of new arrivals, and its relations with the Chinese as hosts, competitors, colleagues, customers and employees. It shows the extent to which hostile and suspicious attitudes towards the Chinese pervaded British popular culture, diplomacy and treaty port society. Part 2 describes the nature and limitations of British attempts at social and institutional reform in the three main sectors of British society: the structures of treaty port life, businesses and missions.

Although British residents accepted the need for reform, in practice they were insular and conservative. Furthermore, successful changes were introduced with the intention of protecting the British presence in China rather than changing its character. This work concludes, however, that genuine attempts were made in this period by influential individuals to alter the character of British treaty port life, and treaty port attitudes, and that the long-term repercussions of these efforts underlie improvements in Sino-British cultural relations since 1928.

This study is a contribution to the social history of the foreign communities in China, the history of Sino-British relations and the social history of British attitudes to China and the Chinese.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## List of Abbreviations used in text and in footnotes

ADM	Admiralty records
APC	Asiatic Petroleum Company
BAT	British American Tobacco, Company, Ltd.
<b>BCCJ</b>	<b><i>Journal of the British Chamber of Commerce, Shanghai</i></b>
BMCT	British Municipal Council Tientsin
BMS	Baptist Mission Society
BOE	Bank of England
BRA	British Residents' Association
BS	Butterfield and Swire
BT	Board of Trade records
CCC	Church of Christ in China
CIM	China Inland Mission
<b>CET</b>	<b><i>China Express and Telegraph</i></b>
CMC	Chinese Maritime Customs
CMSNCo	China Merchants Steam Navigation Company
CNCo	China Navigation Company
<b>CR</b>	<b><i>Chinese Recorder</i></b>
DOT	Department of Overseas Trade
EPM	English Presbyterian Mission
FBI	Federation of British Industries
FO	Foreign Office records
FSC	Friends Service Council
GMD	<b><i>Guomindang</i></b> [National People's Party]
HSB	Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation
ICI	Imperial Chemical Industries
IOLR	India Office Library and Records
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JS	John Swire and Sons, Ltd.
KMA	Kailan Mining Administration
LMS	London Missionary Society
NARA	United States National Archives and Records Authority
NCC	National Christian Council
<b>NCDN</b>	<b><i>North China Daily News</i></b>
<b>NCSN</b>	<b><i>North China Sunday News</i></b>
<b>NCH</b>	<b><i>North China Herald</i></b>
NMM	National Maritime Museum
PCE	Presbyterian Church of England
<b>RAS</b>	<b><i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, North China</i></b>
RG	Record Group
SAD	Special Administrative District [often former foreign Concessions]
SDF	Shanghai Defence Force
SMC	Shanghai Municipal Council
SMP	Shanghai Municipal Police
SOS	School of Oriental Studies
SP	Swire Papers
SPB	Shanghai Publicity Bureau
SVC	Shanghai Volunteer Corps
TBCI	Tientsin British Committee of Information
TBMC	Tientsin British Municipal Council
UCC	Universities' China Committee
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society
WO	War Office records, Public Records Office,

Kew



### **Note on the transliteration of Chinese names**

In accordance with increasingly standard practice the modern *Hanyu pinyin* system has been used in the transliteration of Chinese names. The exceptions are the retention of "Sun Yatsen" and also those transliterations for which the correct Chinese characters can not be found. Contemporary transliterations, such as H.H. Kung or T.V. Sung, will be used only in the first instance together with the *pinyin* version which will be used thereafter.

Contemporary transliterations of place names are retained in organisational titles (for example, Tientsin Womens' Club) and in references.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### “A Message from some Chinese Friends”

On March 7, 1928 the Chargé d’Affaires of the Chinese Legation in London complained to the British Foreign Secretary Sir Austen Chamberlain about “the increasing tendency in Dramas and Plays which are now being produced in London to represent Chinese people in consistently vicious and objectionable form.” “No other Oriental nation,” he continued, “is thus singled out for objectionable dramatic treatment, so far as its people are concerned.”<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Office passed on his complaint to the Lord Chamberlain’s office whose response was a bemused rebuff, tempered before being passed along to the legation.<sup>2</sup>

Two months later G.W. Swire, a director of John Swire and Sons in London, having received a letter from Joseph Bailie, a professor at the Chinese Institute of Technical Training in Shanghai, wrote to his Hong Kong and Shanghai managers that Bailie:

gave us what he called a “message from some Chinese friends”. Although he said expressly that he was merely alluding to a general principle applicable to foreigners as a whole, this message was... a lesson in manners and can be summarised in the following incident... It sounds perhaps a little near home, but we are perfectly certain he did not have us in mind. Dr. Woo, the director or manager of Han Yang, wishing to arrange a charter, came into the office of a foreign firm and finding the shipping clerk out, sat down to read the paper. The shipping clerk returned in due course, rather made Dr. Woo feel by his general bearing that he was taking a liberty in reading the paper, sat down, put his feet on the desk, lit a cigar without any offer to Dr. Woo and then asked what he wanted. One must of course not forget that the foreign educationist in China has his own point of view and doubtless he exaggerates, but he is quite right to rub it in.<sup>3</sup>

The two letters, although unconnected, have a common theme: the relationship between and debate about popular and media images of China, the standard of knowledge about the country, and the behaviour of British subjects there in the years 1928 to 1931. This was an issue of contemporary debate and also one which historians have long felt has had a profound impact on Chinese attitudes towards Britain and the West, and on the history of Western involvement in China.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W.C. Chen to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 7/3/28, FO 228/3801/1 23J.

<sup>2</sup> The whole file can be found in FO 371/15525 F1190.

<sup>3</sup> John Swire and Sons, Limited [hereafter JS], London to Butterfield and Swire [hereafter BS] Hong Kong and Shanghai, 11/5/28 “Anglo-Chinese Relations”, Swire Papers [hereafter JSS] II 2/7. Bailie’s letter to G.W. Swire, dated 26/4/28, can be found in JSS Additional [hereafter ADD] 1185.

<sup>4</sup> It was “the barbed wire thread which wove together the whole fabric of foreign imperialism in China”, Albert Feuerwerker, *The Foreign Establishment in China in the Early Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1976), p.101, see also pp.110-11; Jerome Ch’en, *China and the West: Society and Culture 1815-1937* (London, 1979), pp.89, 232-34; Wolfgang Franke, *China and the West* (Oxford, 1967), pp.124-31; Rhoads Murphey, *The Outsiders: The Western Experience in India and China* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1977), pp.9-10, 227.

Nineteen twenty-eight is not usually taken as a notable date in chronologies of changing attitudes to China because of the attention focused on other twentieth century events such as the Pacific War or the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. The literature on the subject is inconsistent about the chronology of developing attitudes except in the broadest of terms. Most of it has been textually based, and covered "cultural" representations rather than the behaviour of individuals. However, by 1928, with the triumph of Chinese nationalism, individual and group behaviour in the treaty ports was perceived in British government, business and missionary circles as a threat to the continuation of good Sino-British relations.

### **Britain and Chinese Nationalism in 1928<sup>5</sup>**

The Nationalist Revolution was arguably the greatest shock to the treaty power status quo in China since the Boxer rising. Britain's diplomatic position in China from 1925 onwards was greatly strained and could be described as in a state of crisis. The May 30 Movement, which grew out of the Shanghai and Shamian (or Shaji) shootings of Chinese demonstrators, was directed against British interests in China despite the original issue being the killing of a Chinese worker in a Japanese factory.<sup>6</sup> The Hong Kong - Guangzhou strike and boycott began two days after the Shamian shootings and severely disrupted British trade in south China for sixteen months, whilst boycotts elsewhere were very effective in the short-term.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This period is covered by W.R. Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939* (Oxford, 1971), and Richard Stremski, *The Shaping of British Policy during the Nationalist Revolution in China* (Taipei, 1979). The most recent and comprehensive examinations of the subject can be found in E.S.K. Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat: Britain's South China Policy, 1924-1931* (Hong Kong, 1991), and Nicholas R. Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s* (Hanover, New England, 1991). None of the above supersedes the unpublished monographs of Sir David Clive Wilson, "Britain and the Kuomintang, 1924-1928: A Study of the Interaction of Official Policies and Perceptions in Britain and China", (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1973); Peter G. Clark, "Britain and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1927", (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1973), and W.J. Megginson III, "Britain's Response to Chinese Nationalism, 1925-27: The Foreign Office Search for a New Policy", (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, George Washington University, 1973). A general survey can be found in Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921-1931* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965), (although this predates the opening of the British Foreign Office archives for the period), whilst the American diplomatic experience is chronicled in Dorothy Borg, *American Policy and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1928* (New York, 1948); the best English narrative of the Northern Expedition can be found in C. Martin Wilbur, *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923-1928* (Cambridge, 1983), *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> On the May 30th incident and movement see Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, pp.97-126, and R.W. Rigby, *The May 30 Movement: Events and Themes* (Canberra, 1980); much contemporary material can be found in H.G.W. Woodhead, ed., *China Yearbook 1926* [hereafter *CYB* [year]] (Tianjin, 1926), Chpt. XXVI.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, "Britain and the Kuomintang", pp.382-83; for the strike see, D. Kwan, "Deng Zhongxia and the Shenggang General Strike 1925-26", (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1985). Kwan gives a useful analysis of the background and organisation of the strike and firmly locates its origins within the wider context of the anti-imperialist policies of the *Guomindang* and Communist parties, pp.97-112; on the short-term success of the boycott movement see Rigby, *May 30 Movement*,

The British bore the brunt of the *Guomindang*'s anti-imperialist struggle during the Northern Expedition [*beifa*], which began in July 1926. This policy was partly inspired by the Comintern but was largely tactical (in order to split the Powers). It also arose from popular resentment at the behaviour of the British communities and military in China.<sup>8</sup> [See figure 1, following page] The British position so deteriorated and the threat seemed so great that, especially after the September 5th, 1926, Wanxian incident (when British gunboats shelled the Upper Yangzi town after a failed attempt to rescue British ships seized by local troops) military action of some sort seemed imminent. This was aggravated by the contagious anti-nationalist hostility of the British business community; as C.J. Bowie has pointed out, "Britain's men on the spot operated in a political climate which supported the use of coercive action against the Chinese."<sup>9</sup> British subjects were evacuated from the interior and from mission stations. Many business and mission buildings and institutions, schools and hospitals, and foreign homes, were closed, destroyed, damaged or seized by soldiers of one or other of the Chinese belligerents. Business operations were disrupted.<sup>10</sup>

In an attempt to calm and retrieve the situation and in reaction to the imminent arrival of the National Revolutionary Army [*Guomin gemingjun*, NRA], led by the *Guomindang*, in the Yangzi cities the British Foreign Office produced the "December Memorandum" and circulated it to the other Washington Treaty Powers before publishing it. This suggested renouncing any idea "that the economic and political

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pp.141-46; for a sober examination of long term success, or otherwise, see C.F. Remer, *A Study of Chinese Boycotts with special reference to their economic effectiveness* (Baltimore, 1933).

<sup>8</sup> Wilbur, *Nationalist Revolution*, pp.55-56; P. Cavendish, "Anti-Imperialism in the Kuomintang 1923-8", in J. Chen and N. Tarling, eds., *Studies in the Social History of China and South East Asia* (Cambridge, 1970), p.35; Ku Hung-Ting, "The Emergence of the Kuomintang's Anti-Imperialism", *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 14, Nos.1-2 (1978), pp.90-97; "As to foreign relations, we must concentrate our forces upon [the] anti-British movement... For a while we can forbear from extending the anti-imperialistic movement to Japan, France, America, in order to keep Great Britain isolated." "Political Report of the Central Committee [of the CCP] (January 26, 1927), C.M. Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920-1927* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989), Document 76, p.808, For the Russian influence also see Conrad Brandt, *Stalin's Failure in China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1956), and D.J. Jacobs, *Borodin, Stalin's Man in China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> C.J. Bowie, "Great Britain and the Use of Force in China 1919-1931", Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1983, p.52. The Navy was not completely innocent though, as the Foreign Office was well aware: "One must... take into account the tendency of our gallant navy to shoot when they get a chance, and make a chance when they don't get one", [FO 371/11696 F5391/4090/10], quoted in Wilson, "Britain and the Kuomintang", p.471, this viewpoint can be confirmed by any cursory reading of, say, the Hamilton Papers in the National Maritime Museum. For other arguments for the use of force see Wilson, "Britain and the Kuomintang", p.379; Clark, "Britain and the Chinese Revolution", pp.167-71. A naval plan for military action throughout China, can be found in China Station General Letter, No.3, Enclosure 10, From C-in-China (261/2301) 11/3/27, PRO ADM 116/2509. In 1925 even George V was in favour of a Yangzi blockade feeling that "practical proof of our self assertion might have a salutary effect," Baron Stamfordham to Chamberlain, 21/8/25, FO 800/258.

<sup>10</sup> Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, pp.194, 227-28.

development of China can only be secured under foreign tutelage” and furthermore that,

the Powers should yet recognise both the essential justice of the Chinese claim for treaty revision and the difficulty under present conditions of negotiating new treaties in place of the old, and they should therefore modify their traditional attitude of rigid insistence on the strict letter of treaty rights.<sup>11</sup>

These intentions announced a new set of criteria for policy in China and specifically for policy towards the *Guomindang*. The memorandum was not well received<sup>12</sup> and was rather overtaken by events but it continued to be the touchstone of future policy announcements and discussions. It was followed up on January 27th 1927 with the “January Offer” which unilaterally offered a package of concessions, most notably an offer to discuss the status of the British concessions. Other compromises dealt with the recognition of the competency of modern Chinese law courts, the extraterritorial status of missionary institutions, the status of Chinese Christian converts and mission ownership of land.<sup>13</sup>

The NRA’s advance on the Yangzi appeared to threaten Shanghai in early 1927 especially after the mob seizures of the British concessions at Hankou (January 3rd) and Jiujiang (January 6th).<sup>14</sup> Control of these British Concessions was handed over to Nationalist officials to defuse short-term tensions and protect British lives and property. These *fait accompli* were confirmed after negotiations in the Chen-O’Malley agreements (February 19th and 20th).<sup>15</sup> Troop reinforcements had already been ordered by the British Cabinet to Hong Kong in November 1926 but in January 1927 it was decided to send out a division-strong “Shanghai Defence Force” [SDF] to prevent a similar seizure<sup>16</sup>; British subjects were evacuated to the coast cities (in active preparation for war, many felt.)<sup>17</sup> The NRA’s capture of Nanjing (March 24th) was accompanied by attacks on foreigners by ill-disciplined troops and a retaliatory bombardment of the city by foreign warships. Several foreigners were killed, and the British Consul-General was wounded in what was seen by most foreign observers as a deliberate and pre-planned attack.<sup>18</sup> Tension remained high as the *Guomindang* secured their hold on the Yangzi cities and the Wuhan and Nanjing regimes fought

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<sup>11</sup> The full text of the memorandum, and other relevant documents, can conveniently be found in Sir Frederick Whyte, *China and Foreign Powers: An Historical Review of their Relations* (London, 2nd and revised edition, 1928), Appendix V. On the Washington Treaty Powers see Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, pp.16-19.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson, “Britain and the Kuomintang”, pp.441-46.

<sup>13</sup> The text of the offer can be found in Whyte, *China and Foreign Powers*, pp.64-68.

<sup>14</sup> Wilbur, *Nationalist Revolution*, pp.73-77.

<sup>15</sup> Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, pp.126-28.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, “Britain and the Kuomintang”, pp.501-509.

<sup>17</sup> Quakers, characteristically, Lucy Harris to H.T. Silcock, 3/2/27 and W. Sewell, journal letter, 6/1/27, FSC C/5/3 China 1927.

<sup>18</sup> Wilbur, *Nationalist Revolution*, pp.91-92; *CYB 1928*, pp.756-62. There is no evidence at all to support the charge of pre-meditation.

amongst themselves; it was kept high as the British and other powers continued to react to the Hankou and Nanjing incidents. The issue of a reparations settlement of these issues came to dominate British policy after initial enthusiasm for a military response waned.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of the year a calmer acceptance of the implications and reality of *Guomindang* victory was spreading. Despite continued anti-*Guomindang* feeling there was an increasingly influential body of more neutral thought within the Foreign Office which was able to cope with this new situation.<sup>20</sup> Missionaries and businessmen were allowed to return inland. This easing of tension was helped by the split within the *Guomindang* and the rejection of the alliance with the Communists and their bloody suppression and the “re-interpretation”<sup>21</sup> of the anti-imperialism of the *Guomindang*’s right-wing and Jiang Jieshi.

In early 1928 the NRA continued its drive northwards and, despite a bloody clash with the Japanese at Jinan, destroyed or enrolled the northern warlords and captured Beijing. This was the last, militarily consolidatory, phase of the Northern Expedition and the end of the state of abnormal crisis in relations between Britain and the *de facto* power in China.<sup>22</sup>

1928, then, was a “year zero” when both sides consolidated and made conciliatory moves. The re-opening of the British Consulate-General in the new capital Nanjing marked the resumption of close contact between the British and the *Guomindang* after an eighteen month gap. In December that year the British Minister, Sir Miles Lampson formally presented his diplomatic credentials to Jiang Jieshi after agreeing the first of the treaty revisions by signing the tariff-autonomy treaty.<sup>23</sup>

Against this bleak and bloody background the British communities in China had generally (and usually successfully) attempted to continue life and business normally, except during the *grand peur* of 1927. Businessmen faced boycotts, missionaries an organised and violent anti-Christian movement and everybody the lack of law and order, endemic piracy and banditry.<sup>24</sup> It is against this background only that the events and themes of the following four years can be understood. Although public interest in Britain soon waned, feelings amongst the British in China

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<sup>19</sup> See the fuller discussion of this issue in chapter four.

<sup>20</sup> Clark, “Britain and the Kuomintang”, pp.354-60.

<sup>21</sup> The phrase is Cavendish’s, “Anti-Imperialism in the Kuomintang”, p.42.

<sup>22</sup> Wilbur, *Nationalist Revolution*, pp.170-85.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson, “Britain and the Kuomintang”, pp.695-96; E.S.K. Fung, “Britain, Japan and Chinese tariff autonomy, 1927-1928,” *Proceedings of the British Association for Japanese Studies*, 6, No.1 (1981), pp.23-36.

<sup>24</sup> On the anti-Christian movement see Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1988); Ka-che Yip, *Religion, Nationalism and Chinese Students: The Anti-Christian Movement of 1922-27* (Bellingham, Washington, 1980).

still ran high.<sup>25</sup> Many felt that they had been betrayed by a weak Government and weaker Legation in 1927 (many Chinese felt a similar betrayal in the winding down of the *Guomindang*'s populist anti-Imperialism).<sup>26</sup>

The implications for the future could be summed up as a threat to end the privileges associated with and forming extraterritoriality, the legal ones based on the treaties, and the customary ones based on prestige, wealth and colour. The effect of these privileges had been to create what one supporter of this situation later called "a state within a state."<sup>27</sup> The reclamation of tariff autonomy by the Chinese was the first retrocessive step but others were feared, such as the ending of extraterritorial status, the ending of inland navigation rights, the retrocession of the concessions and settlements and the application of Chinese commercial, fiscal and other legislation to British and other foreign companies, organisations and individuals. A kind of part-nationalist, part-anti-foreign programme was feared.

In the face of this threat, and in the light of the victory of Chinese nationalism, but also in an attempt to heal the wounds of the past half-decade and to ensure the smooth daily fulfillment of their functions, businessmen, diplomats and missionaries thought, debated and acted to change their institutional structures and their institutional and individual attitudes.<sup>28</sup>

The next four years were, in comparison to the period of the Nationalist Revolution, relatively peaceful for the foreign communities. The rebellions of 1929 and especially of 1930, although violent, did not seriously endanger the foreign presence in China.<sup>29</sup> Before the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, it was widely assumed that Chinese nationalism, in one form or another, had opened a new era in Sino-Western relations. This meant that compromises in the structure and character of life and business in the treaty ports were inevitable and necessary. In the four years before 1931 it is possible to look at a period when British attempts to come to

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<sup>25</sup> See the comments of H.H. Catford in a letter to C.M. Stubbs in Shanghai, 15/12/27, FSC China/11. Interest waned in the United States as well and, according to the journalist Vincent Sheean, was ended by Lindebergh's crossing of the Atlantic, *Personal History* (New York, 1937), p.190.

<sup>26</sup> For the British case see, for example, J.O.P. Bland on "The 'F.O. School of Thought'", in *China: The Pity of It* (London, 1932), pp.176-97. The Chinese situation is analysed in Cavendish, "Anti-Imperialism in the Kuomintang", pp.42-56.

<sup>27</sup> O.M. Green, *The Foreigner in China* (London, 1943), p.7. On the development and structure of the extraterritorial system see W.R. Fishel, *The End of Extraterritoriality in China* (Berkeley, 1952), pp.1-25.

<sup>28</sup> G.W. Swire to T.H.R. Shaw and N.S. Brown, 8/11/29, "We are anxious to help the Chinese in any way we can and to be friends with them, we wish to meet them in a reasonable way in their efforts at (for example) municipal improvements and we think it sound policy to proceed upon the lines of treaty revision and generous concession in the effort to find a solution, which will give the Chinese the face etc., which they will want. In a word we are what they call "reasonable people"', Swire Archives Misc. 121/IV Inter-War Political Letters 1925-1938 (Sept.) Political File.

<sup>29</sup> Lloyd Eastman, "Nationalist China during the Nanking Decade, 1927-1937", in Lloyd Eastman, et al., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.11-13.

terms with the “new” China were not obscured by the repercussions of the Manchurian and Shanghai crises and the build up to the Sino-Japanese war.

### **The Historiography of Attitudes to China**

There was a paradigmatic shift in general British attitudes towards the Chinese and towards China, its society and culture, in the inter-war period. The root of that change lay in the repercussions of the triumph of political and cultural nationalism in China under the *Guomindang*. That regime’s subsequent failures and limitations matter less than the principles it represented and broadcast.<sup>30</sup> From 1928 onwards British residents in China and the treaty port “China-experts” had the opportunity to come to terms with a situation that was not an inevitable result of the previous half-decade of civil war, that is, a nationalistic regime in power, perhaps permanently. Not since the first Opium War had a nationalist regime in China forced the foreign powers and foreign citizens to analyse and rethink their attitudes.

There are several broad themes within historical works on Sino-foreign attitudes. The earliest dealt mostly with the role “China”, as a construct, played in European intellectual history, especially that of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, and the way images of the country changed because of this.<sup>31</sup> The role of China in European literature was also covered in this way.<sup>32</sup> This approach continues to be the theme in most general works and its conclusion is best summed up as the fact that “changes have not reflected changes in Chinese society so much as changes in European intellectual history.”<sup>33</sup> This approach was widened in 1939 by M.G. Mason who looked at a much more modern period, and a much wider range of observers without concentrating on intellectual history. The interaction between constructs of

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<sup>30</sup> “The Chinese objection to the settlement and concession areas was none the less real for being mainly psychological”, Sir Eric Teichman, *Affairs of China* (London, 1938), p.141.

<sup>31</sup> V. Pinot, *La Chine et la Formation de L’Esprit Philosophique en France (1640-1740)* (Paris, 1932); Adolf Reichwein, *China and Europe: Intellectual and Artistic Contacts in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1925); Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire* (Geneva, 1963); E.J. Van Kley, “Europe’s “Discovery” of China and the Writing of World History”, *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), pp.358-85.

<sup>32</sup> W.W. Appleton, *A Cycle of Cathay: The Chinese Vogue in England during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York, 1951); Pierre Martino, *L’Orient dans la Littérature Française au XVII<sup>e</sup> et au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris, 1906); Qian Zhongshu, “China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth Century”, *Quarterly Bulletin of Chinese Bibliography* (English Edition, new series), 1, No.4 (1940), pp.351-84; and “China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century”, *ibid.*, 2, No.1 (1941), pp.7-48, No.3, pp.113-52. For more recent works see, for example, Mimi Chan, *Through Western Eyes: Images of Chinese Women in Anglo-American Literature* (Hong Kong, 1989); Robin W. Winks and James R. Rush, eds., *Asia in Western Fiction* (Manchester, 1989); W.F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1942* (Hamden, Connecticut, 1982); Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong, 1989); Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel and Hilary Conroy, eds., *America Views China: American Images of China Then and Now* (London and Toronto), 1991.

<sup>33</sup> Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization* (Oxford, 1967), pp.7-8.



China and direct experience of it has also been the subject of recent monographs.<sup>34</sup> The history of Chinese emigration has prompted a series of studies on racial prejudice against Chinese immigrants in the United States, Australia and Canada.<sup>35</sup> In reaction to Western hostility towards Communist China (and *vice versa*) a number of books over the last four decades have attempted to understand the wider context of attitudes to China and the hostility of the PRC to the West.<sup>36</sup> A continuing but increasingly important strand is more synthetic and concerned with what was always a two-way process. This tends to merge into a different type of work on the intellectual relations between China and the West and the history of modern Chinese thought.<sup>37</sup> Most recently work has begun on Chinese attitudes to the West.<sup>38</sup>

Most of these approaches have tended to deprecate the impact both of institutional structures and expectations and of the individual behaviour of Britons in China in favour of European-centered “Orientalist” analyses. This type of work has been encouraged by the work of Edward Said, with his basic premise that “all knowledge is interpretation.” Related analyses have concentrated on more subtle examinations of the relationship between knowledge in cultural discourse and political power.<sup>39</sup> Yet it is clear that at the level of quotidian individual and

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<sup>34</sup> “I am interested primarily in showing the part China played in Western thought and also in setting forth the ideas which Europeans entertained of the Orientals and their country;” Mary Gertrude Mason, *Western Concepts of China and the Chinese, 1840-1876* (New York, 1939), p.vii. On interactions see, for example, Zhang Shunhong, “British Views on China during the time of the Embassies of Lord Macartney and Lord Amherst (1790-1820)”, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> Cheng-Tsu Wu, “*Chink*”: *A Documentary History of Anti-Chinese Prejudice in America* (New York, 1972); for a short bibliography of such works see Sucheng Chan, *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943* (Philadelphia, 1991), pp.xiv-xv; on Canada see Peter W. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy towards Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal, 1990); Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901* (Sydney, 1979).

<sup>36</sup> Harold Isaacs, *Scratches On Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York, 1958, revised as *Images of Asia: American Images of China and India*, New York, 1972); Dawson, *Chinese Chameleon*, *passim*; Franke, *China and the West*, *passim*; Mackerras, *Western Images*, pp.175-261. David Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist: China Perceives America, 1972-1990* (Princeton, 1991), *passim*.

<sup>37</sup> Adolf Reichwein was inspired in 1925 by living in what he thought was the second period in European history in which “Eastern Asia... entered into metaphysical contact with the West”, by which he meant Western intellectual interest in ancient Chinese philosophies, *China and Europe*, p.4; the latter category includes such works as Franke, *China and the West*; Ch’en, *China and the West* (much the best yet) and Y.C. Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West, 1872-1949* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1966).

<sup>38</sup> On Chinese attitudes see Ch’en, *China and the West*, pp.59-91; André Chih, *L’Occident “Chrétien” vu par les Chinois vers la fin du XIXe Siècle (1870-1900)* (Paris, 1962); R. David Arkush and Leo O. Lee, eds., *Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Berkeley, 1989), and the collection of accounts in Zhong Shuhe ed., *Zou xiang shijie: Jindai Zhongguo zhishifenzi kaocha xifang de lishi* (Beijing, 1985), and the *Zou xiang shijie congshu* republication of travellers’ reportages (Changsha, 1985-1986). On the role of Westerners in Chinese racial discourse see F. Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (London, 1992), *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine what we see of the rest of the world* (New York, 1981); p.164; and *Orientalism* (London, 1978). Such works include, for example, Philip Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge, 1988); Warren I. Cohen,

institutional behaviour in the treaty ports there was a clear relationship between constructs of knowledge of the Chinese and attitudes towards them.

The most prominent and influential exponents of British attitudes to China and the Chinese were British residents of the treaty ports.<sup>40</sup> They were prominent both in Western and Chinese eyes, and were the British equivalent of those labelled by Akira Iriye as “representative” Americans, that is, Americans in China who were “crucial in the formation of a Chinese view of the United States.”<sup>41</sup> Although, as shall be shown, metropolitan attitudes certainly informed their own attitudes it is clear that it is largely in the treaty ports that the tale of this phase of the British discourse about China is set. This will be, first and foremost, an examination of the attitudes of representatives and residents of the British treaty port communities.

Attacks on the behaviour of the foreign community in China by Chinese or anti-imperialist historians have a long pedigree. In fact most historians of the foreign presence in China deal at some point with this question although academic examinations of the racial character of the wider conflicts of competing imperialisms in the Far East are relatively recent.<sup>42</sup> The mythical Shanghai park sign “No dogs or Chinese” is the enduring characterisation of the foreign treatment of Chinese there.<sup>43</sup> Such charges played functional roles in political theory and action. They formed part

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ed., *Reflections on Orientalism* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1981); B.J. Moore-Gilbert, *Kipling and “Orientalism”* (London, 1986).

<sup>40</sup> The effects of the treatment by British society of Chinese resident in Britain was, in comparison with the American example, negligible. Far fewer Chinese students studied in Britain than in America and the immigrant society was tiny. As shall be shown, however, the fictional treatment of Britain’s Chinese did have some influence; Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (New York, 1967), pp.28-32, 39; Ng Kwee Choo, *The Chinese in London* (London, 1968), pp.6-20.

<sup>41</sup> Iriye, *Across the Pacific*, pp.33-39. This assumption forms the basis of James Huskey’s “Americans in Shanghai: Community Formation and Response to Revolution, 1919-1928,” (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1985).

<sup>42</sup> In the recent historiography of Sino-British relations see, for example, Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, pp.136-37. On the wider context W.R. Louis has suggested that “the origin of the Pacific war might have been in part racial,” while Christopher Thorne has outlined “the stress that was placed upon racial issues as underlying the Far Eastern situation”, and more recently concluded that the strength of racial feeling encouraged or uncovered by the war “ensured that relations between whites and non-whites... became the object of greatly increased attention and passion.” Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East*, p.1; Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933* (London, 1972), pp.44-47; Thorne, “Racial Aspects of the Far Eastern War of 1941-1945”, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 66 (1980), p.377.

<sup>43</sup> When the author visited the park in 1991 it was being redeveloped but in the late 1980s a sign still stood at the park entrance describing this “insult” to the Chinese which had “aroused popular indignation and disgust”, Paul Theroux, *Riding the Iron Rooster: By Train Through China* (New York, 1988), pp.132-33. For other negative representations of the Shanghai foreign community see G.E. Miller, *Shanghai: Paradise of Adventurers* (New York, 1937); E. Hauser, *Shanghai: City for Sale* (New York, 1940), or Henri Champly’s *The Road to Shanghai: White Slave Traffic in Asia* (London, 1934), for example, or the films *Shanghai Express* (1932), *Shanghai* (1935) and *The Shanghai Gesture* (1941); in another medium there is Hergé’s 1934 Shanghai-set “Tintin” adventure *The Blue Lotus*. More recently see Harriet Sergeant, *Shanghai* (London, 1991) and J.G. Ballard’s novel *Empire of the Sun* (London, 1984), a conspicuous example, especially as it was filmed by Steven Spielberg in 1987.

of the demonisation of “Imperialism” in the mobilisation of anti-imperialist movements during the Nationalist revolution of 1923 to 1928 and in *Guomindang* propaganda afterwards.<sup>44</sup>

The acceptance amongst historians that foreign attitudes were a problem might be claimed purely to derive from hostile *post facto* sources but it is obvious that the debate was a contemporary one. W.P. Chen and G.W. Swire were two amongst many who for differing, even contradictory, reasons were involved. The evidence is wider and worth a short survey. Quaker missionary refugees from Sichuan in early 1927 were shocked by the daily behaviour of “Shanghaianders” (as the foreign residents there liked to call themselves)<sup>45</sup>. So were other visitors, such as the writer W. Somerset Maugham, whose works on China were largely concerned with a negative portrayal of the British communities and their behaviour, and Arthur Ransome who invented the term “The Shanghai Mind” to describe the common anti-Chinese attitudes amongst the British in “the Ulster of the East.”<sup>46</sup> It takes little searching to find such criticism and even less to find evidence justifying it.

There were also many Chinese complaints: from the Legation in London; in journal articles (especially those aimed indirectly at a foreign readership in *The People's Tribune*<sup>47</sup>); through reports of Westerners such as Professor Bailie or Vincent Sheean;<sup>48</sup> in memoirs;<sup>49</sup> or those shown as having been significant in the lives and thinking of Chinese racial theorists.<sup>50</sup> During the Nationalist Revolution while much of the theoretical and polemical debate in the *Guomindang* and the Chinese Communist Party concerned the structures of foreign power in China it often focussed on foreign attitudes and their manifestations. Nothing inspires more quickly than

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<sup>44</sup> See Wilbur, *Nationalist Revolution*, pp.68-73. For propaganda afterwards see the pages of *The People's Tribune*, 1932-34, *passim*.

<sup>45</sup> William Sewell saw a “disdain for the Chinese on the part of the foreigners that makes you sick,” journal letter, 25/3/27, FSC CH/5 ; Clifford Stubbs was later to note “the underlying spirit of superiority and contempt”, Letter to H.T. Silcock, 28/10/27, FSC CH/5.

<sup>46</sup> For Maugham see his novel *The Painted Veil* (London, 1925), the travelogue *On a Chinese Screen* (London, 1922), or the play *East of Suez* (1922) in his *Collected Plays Volume III* (London, 1931). His vignettes of British treaty-port life won him few friends there (see the preface to the novel), the same method was to cause him unpopularity elsewhere, T. Morgan, *Somerset Maugham* (London, 1980), pp.251-52. Arthur Ransome, *The Chinese Puzzle* (London, 1927), pp.28-32, 30. See also Vincent Sheean's account, *Personal History*, pp.199-202.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Jolin Huang, ““China Tea” A Farce in One Act”, satirising the efforts of a returned missionary to set up a Chinese wedding scene for a garden fete, *People's Tribune*, 1 (NS), No.3, 2/1/32, pp.73-91; *People's Tribune*, 5 (NS), No.2, 16/8/32, “Some Aspects of the “Shanghai Mind””; Hao Wuteh “The Breaking Colour Bar in China”, *People's Tribune*, 7 (NS), No.10, 16/11/34, pp.476-87.

<sup>48</sup> See Sheean on the comments of a secretary of Quo Tai-chi [Guo Daiqi] and Eugene Chen, Sheean, *Personal History*, pp.196, 206-207; see, also, Ransome, *Chinese Puzzle*, p.148.

<sup>49</sup> In his autobiography the writer Xiao Qian [Hsiao Ch'ien] recalls discrimination in London, even during the war, *Traveller Without A Map* (London, 1990), p.75; some comments by China Association secretary E.M. Gull about housing discrimination back this claim up, *Facets of the China Question* (London 1931), p.191.

<sup>50</sup> Dikötter, *Discourse of Race in Modern China*, pp.113-15, 155-58.

tangible physical evidence of injustice and prejudice, such as the segregated park on the Shanghai Bund.<sup>51</sup>

### Defining Attitudes

Most historians and international relations writers do not use the terms “attitudes”, “perceptions” or “images” consistently or in line with other disciplines (most psychologists’ definitions of “image” and “perception”, for instance, are not useful for historians) or in any well defined manner. International relations writers are no clearer, they use a variety of conceptual approaches, such as cognitive codes, operational codes, images and belief systems, which are all concerned with the same process: “the nature of the filtering device of existing beliefs about empirical and normative issues”.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore they have generally looked at the role of attitudes in decision making and reporting rather than the wider role of attitudes in “social” interaction.<sup>53</sup>

“Attitude” is one useful concept for this type of work, being the one more likely to retain similar definitions in different disciplines (such as social psychology, social anthropology and sociology). It has been defined as:

a relatively stable predisposition or readiness to react in a specific way to a person, group, idea, or situation. Attitudes are complex products of learning, experience, and emotional processes and include, e.g., our enduring preferences, prejudices, superstitions,<sup>54</sup> scientific or religious views, and political predilections and aversions.

The individual articulation of attitudes may, for the purposes of this thesis, be described as being informed by and contributing to a wider discourse on the character, or “characteristics”, of the Chinese. This definition enables us to look at processes of socialisation, that is the deliberate teaching and learning, or indirect acquisition, of certain attitudes; this also involves examining the relationship between dominant

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<sup>51</sup> For the theoretical debates see Ku, “Emergence of the Kuomintang’s Anti-Imperialism”, pp.87-97, and Cavendish, “Anti-Imperialism in the Kuomintang”, pp.23-56. In 1929 the National Government’s Foreign Minister Wang Zhengting told a British Legation official about “his own past treatment in Shanghai when first told on calling at a private house that the Chinese must come in by the back door,” B.C. Newton to Legation, No.95, 11/7/29, FO 228/3987/13 22Z.

<sup>52</sup> S. Smith, “Belief Systems and the Study of International Relations”, R. Little and S. Smith, eds., *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford, 1988), p.11.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, the discussion on the influence of hostility to communism on official American perceptions of Chinese nationalism in Martin Mun-loong Loh, “American Officials in China, 1923-1927: Their Use of Bolshevism to Explain the Rise of the Kuomintang and Chinese Anti-foreignism”, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1984).

<sup>54</sup> R.M. Goldman, ed., *The Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry* (New York, 1984), p.71.

group and individual attitudes.<sup>55</sup> Other definitions neglect the role of social groups and concentrate on individuals.<sup>56</sup>

It must be remembered that many of the problems outlined in this study partly result from basic problems of cultural interaction between two strong cultural traditions. Some theorists of ethnicity have even argued that these are “evolutionary” problems.<sup>57</sup> There is also probably still resistance against analysis of such discourses of the kind met by V.G. Kiernan; despite the increasing body of such research it still appears not to be seen as “proper history.”<sup>58</sup> It is, after all, difficult to pin down and quantify attitudes and demonstrate cause and effect. Characterisations of attitudes tend to assume, also, that such attitudes were important and influential without always proving this fact.<sup>59</sup> Attitudes and behaviour can contradict yet coexist.<sup>60</sup> While attacks on the whole academic debate about the attitudes, cultural implications and characteristics of (generically) imperialism are unconvincing it would be sensible to be aware, with Christopher Thorne, that there is:

a temptation for those living in a post-imperial Europe, influenced by a very different climate of opinion and often by a sense of guilt, to cast into one stereotyped mould the men who encouraged and carried out Western expansion into Asia.<sup>61</sup>

However, by firmly locating attitudes in their social background and by attempting to explain and understand their social, political and economic *functions* these criticisms will be met and such dangers avoided. The heterogeneous nature of British society in China will also be more faithfully portrayed; this is intended to be a functional, not a moral, analysis.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For a working definition of socialisation see B.B. Wolman, ed., *Dictionary of Behavioural Science* (2nd edition, San Diego, 1989), p.317.

<sup>56</sup> S. Sutherland, *Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology* (London and Basingstoke, 1989), p.38; F.J. Bruno, *Dictionary of Key Words in Psychology* (London, 1986), p.19.

<sup>57</sup> P.L. Van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York, 1981); the state of studies in this field can be assessed from V. Reynolds, V. Falger and I. Vine, eds., *The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism: Evolutionary Dimensions of Xenophobia, Discrimination, Racism and Nationalism* (London, 1987).

<sup>58</sup> See the introduction to the second edition of his *Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes to the Outside World in the Imperial Age* (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp.xiii-xlii. For one opponent see Simon Leys on “Orientalism and Sinology” in *The Burning Forest* (London, 1988), pp.96-100.

<sup>59</sup> Toshio Yokoyama’s *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (London, 1987), is a classic example of this failure.

<sup>60</sup> George Orwell realistically discussed the need for this in his essay on Nationalism: “You cannot get rid of these feelings by just taking thought. But you can at least recognise that you have them, and prevent them from contaminating your mental processes. The emotional urges which are inescapable, and are perhaps even necessary to political action, should be able to exist side by side with an acceptance of reality.” He was pessimistic about the numbers of people who made this “moral” effort, Orwell, “Notes on Nationalism” (1945), *Collected Essays* (2nd edition, London, 1961), pp.302-303.

<sup>61</sup> Thorne, *Limits of Foreign Policy*, p.16; As regards guilt, Wolfgang Franke, for example, hoped to “do a little towards removing this burden” of [mutual] “mistakes and misunderstandings”, *China and the West*, p.vii.

<sup>62</sup> Importantly what has been called, in response to some of the polemical excesses of Said’s *Orientalism*, an “Occidentalisation” of the West should be avoided.

Attitudes also informed and can be inferred from structures (socialising ones such as work and recreation habitats, and the expected place of Chinese callers in a shipping clerk's office) and behaviour (the cigar and the feet on the table). There are concrete forms such as the organisation of housing and other facilities, or marginally less obvious forms such as recruitment, employment and promotional patterns within, say, commercial enterprises or the delegation of areas of responsibility within a wider range of organisations.

### **The Ingredients of Attitudes**

Harold Isaacs' 1958 study of American twentieth century attitudes, *Scratches on Our Minds*, was exceptional in its tangible relation of attitudes to political context. Isaacs interviewed 181 elite members of US society about their attitudes, images and memories of China and the Chinese, and India and Indians. He was interested in their impressions of first encounters, memories, later impressions and the relationship between experience, image and attitude. The results are fascinating and informative but the methodology is unrepeatable at this chronological distance from the subject. Still, an attempt can be made to use traditional historical materials to deal with some of the processes of learning and articulation Isaacs dealt with.

The social sciences are divided over definitions of, let alone approaches to, this subject. This is unnecessary, as Michael Hechter has pointed out:

there is nothing about ethnic and race relations *per se* that warrants the development of a special theory. Indeed, the subject concerns phenomena - like group formation, solidarity, assimilation and collective action - that also occur among many other kinds of groups, be they based on class, religion, or territory.<sup>63</sup>

Historians should also be aware of this. Even a basic introduction to social psychology tells us that there is little exceptional about forming and using images and the formation and use of attitudes:

In the normal course of events, any act of competition or cooperation between two or more human beings is part of a long-term pattern, explicit or implicit. This pattern cannot exist without some kind of a representation or an "image" of what the other person is like, is doing, and is likely to do: and this is as true of competition as it is of cooperation. Our "strategies" also depend upon the image we have of the other person's image of ourselves: and so it goes on.<sup>64</sup>

As it "goes" on then it would follow that up-to-date tools are necessary and that images could be expected to change in the light of, say, changing diplomatic and political relations between Britain and China. Indeed, international relations writers have stressed the relationship between events and dominant images of different

<sup>63</sup> M. Hechter, "Rational Choice Theory and the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations", J. Rex and D. Mason, eds., *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge, 1986), p.265.

<sup>64</sup> H. Tajfel and C. Fraser, "Social Psychology as Social Science", Tajfel and Fraser, eds., *Introducing Social Psychology: An analysis of individual reaction and response* (Harmondsworth, 1978), p.29.

countries.<sup>65</sup> Changes in British attitudes to China and the Chinese can likewise most rewardingly be related to events in China's twentieth century history. As a Department of Overseas Trade [DOT] pamphlet put it in 1934: "much more is known abroad of China and the Chinese than was the case a few years ago" because "China has been "in the news.""<sup>66</sup> Such change is not simultaneous, as shall be shown. Nor should it be assumed that change occurs "naturally": it will be shown that it took a great deal of efforts on the part of more progressive Britons to induce changes. Furthermore, political change highlighted attitudes and especially their more extreme articulations.

It should be borne in mind that the image of the "other" requires an image of the observer. In opposition to traditional anthropological theories of ethnicity which implied group isolation and insular continuity Fredrik Barth stressed the importance and value of looking at the consequences of ethnic interaction which, he concluded, in no way diminished or blunted group identity.<sup>67</sup> He was led to emphasize the formative role of interaction and the problem of "boundary maintenance". From this he concluded that

ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, and thus have the characteristics of organising interaction between people.<sup>68</sup>

Self-ascription entailed "systematic sets of role constraints" on the behaviour of individuals.<sup>69</sup> There are, of course, some limits to self-ascription as a working criteria such as skin colour (non-"white" British subjects in China were never considered by "white"-Britons as British, although neither were British Jews), class and power relations. But even with these qualifications the interest that this holds for the present work can easily be seen. The British in China organised themselves, their attitudes to, and relations with the Chinese, upon various self-defined and self-restraining lines. This generally involved the ascription of certain characteristics to the Chinese.

These ascriptive processes were informed by such wider contextual discourses as those of race, "orientalism", imperialism, anti-communism and paternalism. Anti-communism was a political tool (it was used to discredit the *whole* of the

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<sup>65</sup> K. Deutsch and R. Merrit, "Effects of Events on National and International Images", H.C. Kelman, ed., *International Behaviour: A Socio-Psychological Analysis* (New York, 1965), pp.130-87.

<sup>66</sup> Department of Overseas Trade, *China: Notes on Some Aspects of Life in China for the Information of Business Visitors* (London, 1934), p.1.

<sup>67</sup> F. Barth, Introduction to F. Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference* (Oslo, 1969), p.9-10. For his influence see R. Cohen, "Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 7, 1978, pp.379-403, and R.E. Holloman "The Study of Ethnicity: An Overview", R.E. Holloman and S.A. Arutiunov, (eds.), *Perspectives on Ethnicity* (The Hague, 1978), p.4.

<sup>68</sup> Barth, *Ethnic Groups*, p.10.

<sup>69</sup> "Ethnic identity implies a series of constraints on the kinds of roles an individual is allowed to play, and the partners he may choose for different kinds of transactions," *ibid.*, p.17.

*Guomindang* and Chinese nationalism for instance<sup>70</sup>). It was an ideological and pragmatic motive amongst British observers and actors in China as well as a form of cultural expression<sup>71</sup>; “Englishness” did not involve sympathy for left-wing values.<sup>72</sup> W.J. Megginson’s work has firmly located British opposition to “Communism” (actual or labelled) in China in its domestic context: the decade of the first and second Labour governments, the “Red Scare” election of 1924, the Zinoviev Letter and the General Strike.<sup>73</sup>

The general question of Western attitudes to non-“white” groups is sometimes approached by its historians as an aspect of “Imperialism”. It is taken for granted that the structure of an imperialistic relationship causes, indeed necessitates, specific supporting attitudes.<sup>74</sup> Unless otherwise noted the term shall be taken literally here, after the OED, “pertaining to an empire”, in this case the British one, and not in its later disparaging usage.<sup>75</sup> Regardless of the structure of British involvement in China there appears to be no reason to disagree with V.G. Kiernan’s comment that:

Whether empires were agencies of civilisation or of exploitation, they rested on power, and all attitudes towards backward countries or “native” peoples were deeply imbued with the sensation of power, of imperial dominion.<sup>76</sup>

China was not subject to direct British imperial dominion, except in Hong Kong and Weihaiwei (until 1930), but Britain’s privileges and actions as a treaty power, as will be shown, make the application of Kiernan’s comment quite valid there.<sup>77</sup> If imperialism is treated as a process which affects all the participants, not just the “victims”, but the “Imperialists” too, then it is more likely that clues as to how it perpetuated itself, how it behaved (or why) and its implications would be found. A.P.

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<sup>70</sup> See, for example, North China Daily News, *The Foreigner in China: An Outline History of Foreign Relations in China, Of the reasons for China’s Descent into Chaos, Of the Soviet’s Part in Fostering Confusion, And of the Chinese “Nationalist” Reaction to these several Influences* (Shanghai, 1927), *passim.*, where Chinese nationalism is characterised as Bolshevik-agitated anti-foreignism.

<sup>71</sup> Racial expression too, some have claimed. For example the frequent linking of Jews with Communism in the twentieth century, Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism and British Society, 1876-1939* (London, 1979), pp.142-43.

<sup>72</sup> Whatever George Orwell was later to claim to the contrary in his *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (London, 1941).

<sup>73</sup> Megginson, “Britain’s Response to Chinese Nationalism”, *passim.*; T.O. Lloyd, *Empire to Welfare State: English History 1900-1985* (Oxford, 1986), pp.130-34. Julian Symonds, *The General Strike A Historical Portrait* (London, 1957), pp.66-70, gives a flavour of the instinctive anti-socialism of the British middle classes at that time.

<sup>74</sup> Kiernan, *Lords of Human Kind*, p.326.

<sup>75</sup> Competing definitions can be found in W.J. Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism* (London, 1981), and A.P. Thornton, *Doctrines of Imperialism* (London, 1965).

<sup>76</sup> Kiernan, *Lords of Human Kind*, p.326. The structure of British involvement is discussed in Feuerwerker, *Foreign Establishment*, *passim.*, and G. Woodcock, *The British in the Far East* (London, 1969).

<sup>77</sup> Britain’s strength in the Far East was more in the nature of a self-recognised con-trick than anything else, Ann Trotter, *Britain and East Asia, 1933-1937* (Cambridge, 1975), p.4; On Weihaiwei see P. Atwell, *British Mandarins and Chinese Reformers: The British Administration of Weihaiwei (1898-1930) and the Territory’s Return to Chinese Rule* (Oxford, 1985), and Shiona Airlie, *Thistle and Bamboo: The Life and Times of Sir James Stewart Lockhart* (Hong Kong, 1989).



Thornton wrote that “Imperialism is less a fact than a thought. At its heart is the image of dominance, of power asserted; and power is neither used nor witnessed without emotion”.<sup>78</sup> It must be remembered that this is a two-way process.

Thornton’s comment is an exaggeration, since, as has been shown, British imperialism in China was *as much* a fact as a thought. There were British troops in Tianjin, Shanghai and Beijing, who were deployed as needed; there were British gunboats on the Yangzi and Pearl rivers whilst Weihaiwei and Hong Kong were administered by the British Colonial Office.

Both the official and unofficial articulation of imperial ideology, especially imperial propaganda, rested on attitudes of racial superiority and guardianship that were apparently effective in shaping wider attitudes.<sup>79</sup> It could be argued that the ideology as well as the reality of empire, or at least of its “care and maintenance”,<sup>80</sup> had secured a hegemonic position within the world-view of much of British society and government; this hegemony extended through education, various media and popular culture.<sup>81</sup> This was not shaken by the 1914-1918 war, nor, to any great extent by the Great Depression, nor by the practicalities and economics of empire itself: for, as John Darwin wrote of the inter-war period, “the evidence of its decline was tiresomely elusive.”<sup>82</sup>

The structure of British imperialism relied on bluff, which was the true meaning of the totemic word prestige. If, after its considerable, but overstretched, force of arms, British power abroad (both formal and informal) was maintained through its prestige it is clear that a certain set of attitudes and behaviour would be

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<sup>78</sup> Thornton, *Doctrines*, p.2.

<sup>79</sup> R. Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815-1914* (London, 1976), pp.156-62; J. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984), pp.2, 183-85, 253-58. See also Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905* (London, 1980); Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971); P.D. Curtin, *Imperialism* (London, 1972); Kiernan, *Lords of Human Kind*; D.A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians* (London, 1978); P.B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge, 1986).

<sup>80</sup> J. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post War World* (London and Basingstoke, 1988), p.30. A.J. Christopher chose 1931 as the key date for his *The British Empire at its Zenith* (London, 1988), p.16.

<sup>81</sup> On this topic see, for example, Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, *passim*; J.M. Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1985); J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (Harmondsworth, 1986).

<sup>82</sup> J. Darwin “Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the wars”, *Historical Journal*, 23, No.3 (1980), p.658. “Most of the best current writing on the subject starts from the same point of view and does not detect the defeatism which in the light of the true balance of forces, demographic, economic and military, might have been considered more realistic”, Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset, Volume II, Dream of Commonwealth 1921-1942* (Basingstoke, 1989), p.3. See also the recent symposium on “The Decline of Great Britain”, *International History Review*, 13, No.4 (November 1991), pp.662-783. Not surprisingly, Penelope Hetherington found among British intellectuals “almost universal support for the idea that it was necessary for Britain to stay in Africa”, *British Paternalism and Africa, 1920-1940* (London, 1978), p.154.

required of the British participants to maintain that reputation.<sup>83</sup> Shared British ethnicity meant that this covered both official and “unofficial” British, as Barth makes clear that it would:

The identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgement. It thus entails the assumption that the two are fundamentally “playing the same game.”<sup>84</sup>

The British abroad were fervent believers in the ideal of “playing the same game.” China’s independence should have required subtler handling than was accorded India, for example, but there is little evidence, as the following chapters will show, of anything but pragmatic, mostly official, subtlety. In fact the renunciation in the “December Memorandum” of any official objectives in China except the protection of trade meant that, apart from the considerable constraints of ethnic solidarity, most of the British had no checks on their behaviour and no wider responsibilities towards their host nation.

What needs to be added to Barth’s analysis is an awareness of the fact that the structure of imperialism involves domination of one national group by another, either directly or indirectly. Domination implies suppression. One aspect of suppression, in a hegemonic sense, is denigration and thereby the removal of self-confidence from the suppressed; at the same time inflating the social, cultural and racial self-importance of the dominating group.<sup>85</sup>

The self-image of the British is clearly seen in their image of the Chinese. The Chinese were ascribed characteristic behaviour, national and individual, which was the antithesis of British norms. At its most facetious this was symbolised by the image of “topsy-turveydom” in which all Chinese customs were the opposite of Western ones.<sup>86</sup> The acceptance of this dichotomy necessitated the exaggeration of “English” characteristics as a form of boundary maintenance. As the nature of foreign imperialism was threatened, the response of ordinary British residents also unveiled their more deeply-held beliefs as well as areas of possible compromise.

Imperialism compounded group behaviour. Yet these British groups in China would not have existed without imperialism. Nor would imperialism have its special

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<sup>83</sup> Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century*, pp.158-62. J. Galsworthy’s novel *Flowering Wilderness* (London, 1932) was a seriously intended *reductio ad absurdum* of this view where the apostasy and conversion at gunpoint of a young British poet in the Sudan appears to threaten the survival of the whole British empire. Galsworthys’ novels were favorites of G.W. Swire, who decreed that copies of them should be in the library of the company’s Swatow Club for shipping officers, G.W. Swire to JS London, 4/1/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>84</sup> Barth, *Ethnic Groups*, p.15.

<sup>85</sup> Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century*, pp.157-58.

<sup>86</sup> See the entry on this topic in J. Dyer Ball (revised by E.T.C. Werner), *Things Chinese; or, Notes Connected with China* (Shanghai, 1925), pp.668-71.

characteristics without the history of British and foreign intervention in China.<sup>87</sup> So the changing character of these institutions, the changing character of “Imperialism” in China and the behaviour of the individual must be studied as a whole.<sup>88</sup>

Feuerwerker’s term “foreign establishment” is too neutral a phrase given the characteristics of foreign, treaty power, life in China, such as extraterritoriality, concessions and settlements, troops and gunboats in the interior and inland navigation rights. These are, by any definition, “imperialistic” rights, regardless of their “formality”.<sup>89</sup> They enabled even the lowliest member of the protected foreign-community to flaunt his privileges and abuse his status.<sup>90</sup> It is clear that even those Europeans no longer governed by treaties were able to take advantage of them, Germans, for instance, and the luckier Russians.<sup>91</sup>

“Imperialistic” attitudes<sup>92</sup>, hierarchical and paternal, were closely related to class attitudes. As will be shown below, the British communities in China were extremely class-conscious, snobbish and divided on class line, even the missionaries, despite claims to the contrary.<sup>93</sup> This rigid consciousness (enforced close proximity probably heightened the awareness acquired in Britain) was also extended towards the Chinese. Most of the Chinese foreigners met, or allowed themselves to meet, were servants, employees or coolies.<sup>94</sup> It was only a short step to believing that all Chinese were lower class. The ready importation of class-antagonism into race-relations has been well remarked:

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<sup>87</sup> Innes Jackson blamed what she perceived as the violent behaviour of Shanghailanders towards the Chinese on “money and a respected Consular service,” *China Only Yesterday* (London, 1938), p.32.

<sup>88</sup> “The psychological implications of this “sharing” of wider social settings could not be encompassed by a social psychology restricted to the study of face-to-face interaction”, Tajfel and Fraser, *Introducing Social Psychology*, p.35.

<sup>89</sup> In “British Informal Empire: The Case of China”, *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 14, No.1 (March 1976) pp.64-81, Britten Dean has argued that it is wrong to include China as part of Britain’s Informal Empire because there was no “systematic process by which British subjects effectively subordinated” China “by the systematic application of non-market constraints.” [p.76] China was low on the list of British government priorities but this does not mean that it was any less efficiently dealt with in order to achieve more limited aims, the reverse is probably true. He is right to claim that a set of attitudes alone do not make informal empire but too rigorous in his definitions and wrong to assert that the study of attitudes is “inapplicable” to discussions of informal empire [p.75].

<sup>90</sup> Fishel, *End of Extraterritoriality in China*, pp.217-18; Isaacs, *Scratches*, pp.150-51, “even to the lowlier members of the master race came all the appurtenances of high caste and high creature comfort at low cost.” As opposed to colonial Asia, no responsibility, of behaviour or of interest, was demanded, [ibid.].

<sup>91</sup> Franke, *China and the West*, p.125. In the Municipal Gaol in Shanghai all non-Chinese, with or without extraterritorial rights, were accommodated in the Foreign Gaol, E.W. Peters, *Shanghai Policeman* (London, 1937), p.164.

<sup>92</sup> This remains a question of class attitudes, not a class analysis of race and ethnic relations, see for example, M. Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.146-69.

<sup>93</sup> Teichman, *Affairs of China*, p.281-82.

<sup>94</sup> A term sometimes used pejoratively as a general description of the Chinese.

in innumerable ways [the gentleman's] attitude to his own "lower orders" was identical to that of Europe to the "lesser breeds"...Much of the talk about the barbarism or darkness of the outerworld, which it was Europe's mission to rout, was transmuted fear of the masses at home.<sup>95</sup> British attitudes to China and the Chinese then were located in the context of the fact, and necessity, of "white" race supremacy, imperial maintenance and paternalism, and anti-communism. These were positive, mobilising beliefs, accepted, or internalised, by most "representative Britons" in China.

This thesis is concerned with two processes. It first assesses the content and function of British attitudes to China taking the treaty port British as its "representative" focus. The next chapter will discuss the nature of the prevalent construct of the Chinese character and its sources; chapter 3 is an examination of the structure and mores of British treaty port society. This will be followed by three chapters examining attempts to change British behaviour and public discourse. This analysis will be based on the archives of selected representative institutions in the three main areas of the British community: official and municipal life, missionary society and the commercial world. It will focus on the relationship between the attitudes, values and needs of the wider and the particular communities and also on the behaviour and beliefs of individual Britons. It will describe the changes introduced, their motivations, the effects desired and the resistance encountered. British attitudes to China and the Chinese will be examined then, at that point when they were most exposed and most influential, that is when they were the subject and object of reform.

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<sup>95</sup> Kiernan, *Lords of Human Kind*, pp.30, xvi-xvii.

## Chapter 2

### Chinese Characteristics and treaty port society:

#### An armour of false facts?

#### Introduction

Standing on the wharf at Singapore we “new hands” out from England are suddenly confronted by a line of lean, grunting, slant-eyed Chinese rickshaw pullers, our first Chinese. Forgotten pictures in bound volumes of the *Illustrated London News*, read in the school reading-room on wet autumn days, surge up to our minds; pictures of the Boxer Rebellion, bloodthirsty pictures indeed. Up they rise to memory, and one’s “inside” gives a second’s gasp: “Good heavens! Is there a whole nation of such sinister people awaiting my arrival in China in five days’ time?”<sup>1</sup>

Information about China was easy to come by in Britain in the 1920s. There were newspaper and magazine reports, hundreds of books specifically on the country in print and dozens of new ones appearing yearly while Chinese themes pervaded British fiction and theatre. There were around 13,000 Britons in China at any one time writing letters, (most missionaries wrote circular letters to friends and supporters), or similarly communicating with relations and friends. There were missionary and secular lectures, films, plays, a few university courses, and memories of childhood reading in school reading-rooms.

The accuracy of this information was variable and much of it was partisan. In sum, however, it represented a discourse concerned with all aspects of Sino-British relations. This discourse supplies contextual evidence for this investigation of British treaty port attitudes towards the Chinese and China. It will be shown that Britons arriving in the treaty ports went through a process of socialisation that built on and extended metropolitan-derived notions of the Chinese.

A large proportion of printed works dealing with all aspects of China routinely referred to Chinese “characteristics”, or used “characteristics” as an explicatory construct within their analyses. While the use of such a construct was not solely a feature of writing on China, nor its sole feature, there was a particular emphasis on such analysis, especially in works aimed at more popular audiences; related emphases can also be found in fiction, in theatre and also in private correspondence and reports of conversations. The context of this analysis was the diplomatically unequal relationship between Britain and China before the Nationalist Revolution. The construction, perpetuation, and justification of the structure of the British communities in China relied on the ascription of specific, negative, characteristics to the “sinister” Chinese, in contrast to the positive self-ascribed

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<sup>1</sup> G. Barnes, *Enter China: A Study in Race Contacts* (London 1928), pp.103-104.

attributes of the British. The substitution of “characteristics” for more objective economic or socio-political analysis was functional. It had a profound impact on the character of public discourse about China and consequently on the preconceptions of those going to China or already there.

### Chinese “Characteristics”

National “character” or “race” analysis was a widely used and largely unquestioned mode of discourse before the experience of Nazism discredited it.<sup>2</sup> In most cases the discourse of “race”, and popular use of the term, were characterised by what have been termed “folk concepts of race.” These are elastic concepts that “can be utilised in ways that lack biological or social scientific justification” in the explanation of apparent differences between identifiable ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> In the formation of the construct of Chinese characteristics the use of this “folk” vocabulary and an *a posteriori* mode of arguing from effects to “causes” were prevalent.

The body of literature which dealt solely with such analysis was small but influential. American missionary A.H. Smith’s popular *Chinese Characteristics* (1890) was still a good seller and widely recommended reading in the 1920s. One survey in 1925 placed it top of a list of “The Most Helpful Books on China” and second best-seller in three Shanghai foreign-language bookstores.<sup>4</sup> Smith’s book was motivated by the necessity of analysing defects in the Chinese that Protestantism would remedy. He claimed to be an objective “observer” and dismissed the objections of previous writers who had felt unable to attempt to analyse the character of the Chinese.<sup>5</sup> The work was critically dismissive of Chinese civilization and culture, concluding in short, that the Chinese lacked “character and conscience” and that the solution was reform from outside, through the introduction of “Christian civilization.”<sup>6</sup> The importance of this work was

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Sir Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in its Formation* (London, 1927), which deals mainly with Britain and W. Thompson, *The Mexican Mind: A Study of National Psychology* (Boston, 1922), many of whose chapter headings are reminiscent of A.H. Smith’s *Chinese Characteristics*. On criticism see Banton, *Racial Theories*, p.xi.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Banton, *Racial and Ethnic Competition* (Cambridge, 1983), p.53.

<sup>4</sup> CR, May 1925, pp.299-305. It can be found, recommended as “interesting but somewhat out of date” in Bailie-Grohman papers, GRO/5 “Quite Useful Bibliography”, 1928; in H. Hodgkin, *China in the Family of Nations* (London, 1925), p.253 and in the 1928 War Office pamphlet *Notes on Shanghai*, p.31. See also A.D.C. Sowerby, “What is Right With China”, *China Journal*, 8, February 1928, p.58. It was later recommended by Erich Teichman for its honesty and because it derived from Smith’s own experience in China, *Affairs of China*, p.297. In 1928 it was on the language syllabus of the LMS in Fujian, E.A. Preston to F.H. Hawkins, 5/7/28, LMS China Fukien Box 15.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p.11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp.396, 404. These criticisms ran through his other works such as his influential *Village Life in China: A Study in Sociology* (New York, 1899, London 1900), p.349. The chapter titles give the flavour of the book: “Face; Economy; Industry; Politeness; The Disregard of Time; The Disregard of Accuracy; The Talent for Misunderstanding; The Talent for Indirection; Flexible Inflexibility; Intellectual Turbidity; The Absence of Nerves; Contempt for Foreigners; The Absence of Public Spirit; Conservatism; Indifference to Comfort and Convenience; Physical Vitality; Patience and Perseverance; Content and Cheerfulness; Filial Piety; Benevolence; The Absence of Sympathy; Social Typhoons; Mutual Responsibility and Respect for

that it codified a set of previously disparate characterizations, and supplied a recognisable construct of the Chinese character which other commentators referred to as well, as a model of analysis which they could follow. In this model the Chinese were an object for study, rather than individual participators in an evolving and changing culture. It anticipated the respected and self-consciously sociological work of ex-British consul E.T.C. Werner, which married these characteristics with an evolutionary theory of racial development, at an early stage of which the Chinese race was placed.<sup>7</sup>

Smith's work was liberally cribbed and copied. Hong Kong Bishop R.O. Hall's *Eminent Authorities on China* (1931) was the *reductio ad absurdum*, a compilation of passages from Smith and other Western writers. It was arranged in three sections, ostensibly to allow readers to judge the Chinese character themselves: "The Realists", "The Optimists" and "The Pessimists"; Smith was quoted under "Potted Chinese Psychology".<sup>8</sup> A revised fifth edition of J. Dyer Ball's eclectic *Things Chinese* (1892) was published in Shanghai in 1925 and was still advertised by Kelly and Walsh in 1929 under the heading "5,000 Things You Ought to Know About China... How Many Do You Know?" This combined analyses of the Chinese character with an almanac. The sections on "Riots", "Suicide", "Time", "Topsy-turvydom" and "Chinese People, Characteristics of" (more balanced than some such essays) owe much to Smith.<sup>9</sup>

A later generation of commentaries by treaty port writers such as Rodney Gilbert, A.F. Legendre and R. d'Auxion de Ruffé were largely also predicated on identifying the faults of the Chinese character and did so using, or referring to, racial theories. Their motivation was explicitly political. Gilbert's *What's Wrong with China* (1926) was a popular journalistic polemic and its negativity was anchored on the claim that China "is already spoiled and capricious beyond words, simply because she has been consistently overpraised and overrated when she should have been spanked."<sup>10</sup> The book was structured on the premise that "There are inferior races in the world" and warned that unless the "Anglo-Germanic" people solved the political problems of Asia and Africa there would be race-war:

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Law; Mutual Suspicion; The Absence of Sincerity; Polytheism, Pantheism, Atheism; The Real Condition of China and Her Present Needs." For an analysis see C.W. Hayford, "Arthur H. Smith and his China Book", S.W. Barnett and J.K. Fairbank, eds., *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writings* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985), pp.153-174.

<sup>7</sup> E.T.C. Werner, *China of the Chinese* (London, 1919), pp.7-8.

<sup>8</sup> Hall felt that the Chinese exhibited "callous brutality - duplicity - untruthfulness - an amazing absence of thievishness - patience - perseverance - generosity, and a sense of character," *Eminent Authorities on China* (Shanghai, 1928), pp.225-39, 247.

<sup>9</sup> J. Dyer Ball (revised by E.T.C. Werner), *Things Chinese; or, Notes Connected with China* (Shanghai, 1925); *NCDN*, 2/5/29, p.1. It was reprinted in London and Shanghai in 1926. It can be found recommended in Julean Arnold, *Commercial Handbook of China*, Volume 2, (Washington, 1920), p.464, and was still in print in 1934, *A Glimpse of China: A Handbook of Information for the Resident and Visitor* (Nanjing, 1934), p.163.

<sup>10</sup> Rodney Gilbert, *What's Wrong with China* (London, 1926), p.7.

in which a mere handful of Anglo-Germanic superiors, with no preparation and no binding organisation among themselves, will be called upon to revert completely to Nietzschean militarism and subdue, exterminate or enslave all the inferior peoples of the earth, organised into a vast rebellion of the unfit, or go under.<sup>11</sup>

Differences between the Chinese and Occidentals were so great, and so exacerbated by the closer proximity caused by improved communications that conflict was felt to be inevitable until one side or the other took the initiative and dictated to the other.<sup>12</sup> This was by no means an original premise, it owed much to the work of influential polemicists such as Lothrop Stoddard and other writers on “race” questions;<sup>13</sup> nor was it unfamiliar to the Chinese themselves.<sup>14</sup> Grafted on to this scenario was a body of critical comments about the characteristics of the Chinese (they were unmanly,<sup>15</sup> docile, mendacious, idle, intolerant, etc.), and Chinese society, which was largely based on the premise that “the Chinese are children.”<sup>16</sup> The book was timely, originally appearing in article form in the *North China Daily News*; it was published in March 1926, and, with its attacks on Western diplomatic (and military) inaction and flattery of Westerners in China, was very popular amongst expatriate Britons, and if disliked at least read.<sup>17</sup> Gilbert’s later work was also based on these themes.<sup>18</sup> This racial analysis of Chinese characteristics was reinforced by the works of other treaty port residents such as A.F. Legendre’s *Modern Chinese Civilization* (1929) which was also firmly within the mainstream body of acceptable China analysis.<sup>19</sup>

This influential genre was created and perpetuated in the missionary and political self-interests of both writers and audience. It was, however, only the most obvious of the forms in which the discourse on Chinese characteristics was articulated. Others, in differing and often widely-circulating media, reinforced its influence.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp.14, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.199.

<sup>13</sup> See Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (London and New York, 1920) and *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under-Man* (London, 1922). On scientific grounds J.W. Gregory advocated mass segregation of the races, warned against miscegenation and predicted “jarring friction” in mixed race societies, *The Menace of Colour* (London, 1925), pp.239, 241. On the influence of these writers see P.G. Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder, Colorado, 1988), pp.110-11. This theme did not vanish in the 1930s, see, for example, Étienne Dennerly, *Asia’s Teeming Millions: and its Problems for the West* (London, 1934), pp.233-43; Champly, *Road to Shanghai* and his *White Women, Coloured Men* (London, 1936).

<sup>14</sup> Dikötter, *Discourse of Race in Modern China*, p.159-162;

<sup>15</sup> Gilbert, *What’s Wrong*, pp.166-200; the otherwise pro-Chinese John Nind Smith agreed on the question of manliness, *China’s Hour* (London, 1930), pp.164-66.

<sup>16</sup> Gilbert, *What’s Wrong*, pp.45-49.

<sup>17</sup> There were two editions in London in 1926 and one in 1927. For individual recommendations of the book see W. Agnew papers, Letter to Mother, 24/4/27; Hamilton papers, Letter to Freddy, 13/6/27 and Lampson Diaries, 28/10/26.

<sup>18</sup> *The Unequal Treaties: China and the Foreigner* (London, 1929).

<sup>19</sup> A.F. Legendre, *Modern Chinese Civilisation* (London, 1929), pp. 288, 160, 170, 175-77, 182-85. It was well reviewed by J.O.P. Bland, *NCH*, 16/3/29, p.470, (reprinted from the *Sunday Times*).



### Newspapers, Commentaries, Commentators and their clichés

China's newsworthiness after 1925 encouraged the publication and republication of China-related commentaries. It also prompted a vivid press debate in which many of the familiar notions about the Chinese, codified by A.H. Smith, were repeated. Many writers took as given the viability of his analytical model; some even borrowed his catchy title.<sup>20</sup> Much of this discourse naturally came from the pens of treaty port writers. A.M. Kotenov, a white Russian clerk at the Mixed Court in Shanghai, and author of works on the Court and the SMC, prefaced his analysis with the statement that:

A knowledge of politico-economic facts and exact situations does not constitute true knowledge of the Chinese people... We assert that the very structure of the Chinese mind requires a knowledge of reactions rather than actions and of consequences rather than events.<sup>21</sup>

With few exceptions most professional commentators adopted this approach in varying degrees or peppered their analyses with references to the Chinese "mind".

French Shanghai resident and lawyer R. d'Auxion de Ruffé's *Is China Mad?* (1928) claimed that "it is necessary to penetrate into the labyrinth of the mentality of the Chinese" before commenting on recent political events.<sup>22</sup> E.M. Gull, secretary of the China Association, set out to deal with some "incontestable" facts about the Chinese mind, devoting chapters of his *Facets of the China Question* (1931) to "Non-Practical China" and "The Sinister Side".<sup>23</sup> Hong Kong University lecturer J.N. Smith, began his *China's Hour* (1930) with a chapter on "The Chinese Mind".<sup>24</sup> Even B. Lenox Simpson ("Putnam Weale"), whose work usually eschewed such analyses, announced that "The problem of China is largely pathological, and very slightly political."<sup>25</sup> Treaty port journalist H.G.W. Woodhead remarked, for example, that "the Chinese is not noted for moral courage. He can easily be worked up into a state of hysteria against foreigners..."<sup>26</sup> Ex-SMC Secretary and *Times* journalist J.O.P. Bland argued for "the duty of reparation"

<sup>20</sup> *Notes on Shanghai*, Appendix: "Some Chinese Characteristics"; DOT, *Notes on Some Aspects of Life in China*, Chapter VI, "Chinese Characteristics"; O.M. Green, *Discovering China* (London, 1938), pp.5-6.

<sup>21</sup> A.M. Kotenov, *New Lamps for Old: An Interpretation of Events in Modern China and Whither they Lead* (Shanghai, 1931), foreword. On Kotenov see "Guanyu 'Shanghai huishen gongtang yu gongbuju' he 'Shanghai gongbuju yu huaren' de zuozhe Ketaineifu de dangan" [Concerning the records of A.M. Kotenov - author of "Shanghai: Its Mixed Court and Council" and "Shanghai: The Council and the Chinese"], *Dangan yu Lishi*, No.2 (1986), pp.4-8.

<sup>22</sup> d'Auxion De Ruffé spent 45 pages listing bad qualities (an arrested and impossible language, "mental torpidity", "incoherence - disorder - bad will", face, "lack of national solidarity" and the use of fingers to blow noses) and 4 only on good ones, d'Auxion de Ruffé, *Is China Mad?* (Shanghai, 1928), pp.13-58, 59-63. This was originally published as *Chine et Chinois d'aujourd'hui: le nouveaux peril jaune* (Paris, 1926), and translated into English by a *North China Daily News* journalist.

<sup>23</sup> Gull, *Facets of the Chinese Question*, pp.15-38, 111-23.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, *China's Hour*, pp.17-31.

<sup>25</sup> Putnam Weale, *Why China Sees Red* (New York, 1925), p.114. See his *The Conflict of Colour* (London, 1910), *passim*. His attitude to inter-racial sex was unfavourable however, see his "The Forbidden Boundary" and "The Fever Bed" in *The Forbidden Boundary and other stories* (London, 1908).

<sup>26</sup> H.G.W. Woodhead, *The Truth About the Chinese Republic* (London, 1925), p.267.

the West owed China but was convinced that “the permanent causes of unrest” were “inseparable from China’s deep-rooted social system” and “the structural character of the people;” and that “vain doctrines of racial equality” should be ignored.<sup>27</sup> Lionel Curtis of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, who took a strong interest in China at this point, also elaborated a few of the qualities of the Chinese.<sup>28</sup>

Not all such accounts were hostile but works such as Bertrand Russell’s *The Problem of China* were in a minority.<sup>29</sup> Many writings based on the discourse of characteristics can also be found in newspapers and periodicals and in the missionary press.<sup>30</sup> It was perhaps unusual for an editorial in the *North China Daily News* to directly paraphrase Bret Harte’s line about “the Heathen Chinese”<sup>31</sup> but it was quite common to find comments about the various accepted characteristics of the Chinese, heathen and, especially, otherwise, mostly in commentaries on Chinese politics or society, but at times as separate articles.<sup>32</sup> News stories often contrasted the characteristic reactions of Chinese and Westerners, especially their responses to accidents, as did their correspondence pages.<sup>33</sup>

Some of this analysis was explicitly offensive. The British Consulate-General in Shanghai described one British paper, *The Showdown*, (which had a respectable circulation of 1,500), as aiming to “exploit the craving for scurrilous abuse of the Chinese, which exists on the part of a section of the Foreign Community in Shanghai.”<sup>34</sup> *The Showdown*’s editor, China-raised W.B. Lockhart, also wrote frequently in a similar vein for the *North China Daily News*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Bland, *China*, pp.4-5, 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Lionel Curtis, *The Capital Question of China* (London, 1932), pp.15-17.

<sup>29</sup> B. Russell, *The Problem of China* (London, 1922, reprinted in 1926), pp.199-213.

<sup>30</sup> When the *North China Daily News* entitled an editorial “What’s Wrong With China”, it was consciously referring to this type of analysis, *NCH*, 23/3/29, p.478. For mission writings see, for example, E.M. Poteat, “The Race Mind and the Religious Message”, *CR*, Dec 1928, pp.753-60.

<sup>31</sup> From “Plain language from Truthful James”, *The Complete Works of Bret Harte*, Volume 1, (London, 1911), pp.131-33.

<sup>32</sup> *NCH*, 19/5/28, p.271. In 1928 the *Celestial Empire* used Harte paraphrases to headline separate stories about the “Nationalists” and Chinese drivers: “Strange are the Ways”, *CE*, 15/9/28 p.365 and “The Chinese Chauffeur. For Tricks That Are Vain”, *ibid.*, p.366. See, for a specific example *NCSN*, 11/1/31 p.6, “Words and Bonds” by “Kunikos”: “One of the traits which most interests the student of things Chinese is the comparative lack of consistency in their outlook.” Hart’s poem was also used as the source of the title of a hostile American commentary, Ralph Townsend, *Ways that are Dark: The Truth About China* (New York, 1933).

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, CMC official C.S. Archer (who later wrote some novels about China) in an article reprinted from the *Daily Express*, *NCH*, 23/6/28, p.536.

<sup>34</sup> “List of Foreign Newspapers in Shanghai”, Shanghai No.202, 25/7/30, FO 228/4189/3 22. Lockart’s father had been born in Shanghai in 1850 and Lockhart had lived most of his life there, Shanghai Municipal Police Report, “William Bruce Lockhart”, 3/11/28 in Shanghai No.256, 6/12/28, FO 228/4045/3 61L.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, *NCDN*, 12/8/27, p.4; in 1931 he wrote opposing the collection of funds for flood relief because “it is no longer the business of the foreigner to dissipate his dwindling resources on the shifting human quicksands of this ever hostile race of people”, *NCH*, 18/8/31, p.237. Most of the letters in response supported his stand, *ibid.* and *NCH*, 25/8/31 p.272-73.

An allied, but more sociological, debate on race relations was intermittently a feature of these commentaries, especially missionary writings. This largely involved discussions of what Bland dismissed as “doctrines of racial equality”, such as were to be found in the work of George Barnes and the introspective pages of the *Chinese Recorder*.<sup>36</sup> Barnes regretted missionary “paternalism” and argued that “the Chinese require neither whitewash nor blacking for their characters.”<sup>37</sup> Basil Mathews, like other writers influenced by Stoddard, was worried by the threat of “a catastrophic race-migration of unexampled magnitude and menace to the peace of the world”, especially as “When we talk of the unity of man, we do not mean the uniformity of men.”<sup>38</sup>

### Commentators’ Clichés

The reliance of the treaty port writers on the discourse of characteristics involved them in the use of a set of stock clichés with, it will be shown, functional intent, when dealing with political and economic events and trends in China.

In these works China was felt to be a civilization in decline (a concept which often, as in Legendre’s work, had racial implications<sup>39</sup>), which needed foreign assistance of one sort or another, but not foreign connivance with nationalism.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, as the Chinese were, characteristically cruel, the rendition of extraterritoriality would lead to a repetition of the judicial cruelties inflicted on Britons in the years before 1842 (which were often itemised to emphasize this point).<sup>41</sup> On a positive note their characteristic selfishness and loyalty to the family made it impossible for communist ideas to take hold.<sup>42</sup>

There was a general refusal to admit that the Nationalist Revolution represented a new departure in Chinese politics, it was portrayed as a new Boxer rising or else as the

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<sup>36</sup> Barnes, *Enter China*, *passim*.. On the *Chinese Recorder* see for example, T.C. Chao “Some thoughts on International Relations” *CR*, November 1924, pp.701-705; F. Rawlinson, “Race”, *ibid.*, pp.706-708; E.R. Hughes “Race Prejudice and Some Allied Religious Issues”, *CR*, February 1925, pp.79-85; T. Ekeland, “Missionary Paternalism”, *CR*, July 1926, pp.478-86; F. Rawlinson, “China as an Equal”, *CR*, August 1926, pp.575-90; Pearl S. Buck “Is There a Place for the Foreign Missionary?”, *CR*, February 1927, pp.100-107; D.H. Smith, “For What am I Here”? A Junior Missionary’s Viewpoint”, *CR*, March 1928, pp.157-60; “Missionaries and Race Problems”, *CR*, April 1928, pp.202-204.

<sup>37</sup> Barnes, *Enter China*, pp.90, 149-50.

<sup>38</sup> Basil Mathews, *The Clash of Colour: A Study in the Problem of Race* (London, 1924), pp.50, 151. By 1931 this had been through 23 impressions.

<sup>39</sup> Legendre, *Modern Chinese Civilisation*, pp. 206-208, 288.

<sup>40</sup> Putnam Weale, *Why China*, pp.262-64; N. Peffer, *China: Collapse of a Civilization* (London, 1931), pp 3-9.

<sup>41</sup> W.E. Soothill, *China and England* (London, 1928), pp.32-41; Putnam Weale, *Why China*, pp.323-32; H.G.W. Woodhead, *A Journalist in China* (London, 1934), p.261.

<sup>42</sup> Bland, *China*, p.284; P.T. Etherton and H.H. Tiltman, *The Pacific: A Forecast* (London, 1928), p.59. Some writers claimed, however, that communism was not a new phenomenon in China, see F.R. Martin, *Communism in China in the XI Century* (London, 1927), *passim*., and Mrs Alfred Wingate, *China Through the Ages* (London, 1932), pp.120-21.

child of Bolshevik gold.<sup>43</sup> This cliché spread as far as that bastion of middle-class clichés, *Punch* magazine (see figure 2, following page). The attempt by the National Government to regain effective control of the Maritime Customs, for example, was reduced in the foreign press to a stereotypical story of corrupt Chinese politicians seeking a steady income.<sup>44</sup>

In tandem with this insistence on analysing China in terms of the past, there was a bias against “modern” China; that is, the effects of Westernization and Western education (both within China and on the returned students.)<sup>45</sup> Whilst commentators asserted the necessity of foreign help, tutelage or education, they were not happy dealing with the fruits of that education. The deracinated and “half-educated” returned student was blamed for the nationalism which threatened the foreign position. In effect the hegemonic function of Western tutelage was undermined as the pupil-teacher relationship was thus threatened.<sup>46</sup> As in the Empire proper, many Britons seem to have only felt happy speaking from their own traditional paternalistic positions to traditionally placed Chinese.<sup>47</sup> The Chinese scholar-gentry were idealised<sup>48</sup> and the passing of the Manchus regretted.<sup>49</sup> Attacking the returned student was also, perhaps, a way of “reasonably” attacking the notion of Chinese progress itself to which all commentators had to pay lip-service (as part of the ideological baggage of paternalism) but which in practice undermined the Western position in China.

Not all commentators were so transparently serious. Events in China were often trivialised and the country portrayed as a land of comic-opera warlordism and pidgin-English, while Chinese personalities were exoticised or rendered picturesque. As late as

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<sup>43</sup> Lenox Simpson claimed in 1927 that “foreigners could trace almost identical situations during the past 16 years, the chief difference being, ...that the present situation was one in which foreigners were being singled out for especial attack”, *NCH*, 14/5/27, p.290. “The present anti-foreign feeling running through China is perhaps more widely spread than such exhibitions of feeling have been in the past, but it is not different from those that have gone before”, L.A. Lyall to Sir Francis Aglen, 28/5/27, Maze papers, Confidential Letters, Vol.2.

<sup>44</sup> *NCH*, 5/1/29, p.2.

<sup>45</sup> For example see Bland, *China*, pp.137-53; Putnam Weale, *Why China*, pp.99-101, 115-17; Pfeffer, *China*, pp.130-33. Benson lamented the passing of “a peasant civilization... dignified and sinless” now in the hands of “arrogant half-literate mission trained schoolboys” Benson to Stephen Hudson, 15/7/30, Schiff papers, BL ADD.Mss.52916. This was shared by many Chinese thinkers, Jerome Ch’en described a “curious unanimity” between conservative Chinese and Westerners in their views about Chinese radicalism, especially after 1927, and also in their dislike and distrust of the returned students, *China and the West*, pp.52, 169-73 (as have some historians, Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West*, p.503).

<sup>46</sup> A similar pattern could be seen in response to British educational efforts in India, see Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (London, 1990), pp.164-65 for an example. See also G.D. Killam on attitudes towards “The Educated African”, *Africa in English Fiction 1874-1939* (Ibadan, 1968), p.71-81.

<sup>47</sup> “The Englishman... has always shown a preference for the independent-minded peoples rather than for the imitative peoples... types of humanity with a tradition and a scale of values of their own”, Alfred Zimmern, *The Third British Empire* (London, 1926), p.83.

<sup>48</sup> H.A. Giles, *Chaos in China* (Cambridge, 1924), pp.36-38; Soothill, *China and England*, p.45.

<sup>49</sup> Soothill felt that the 1911 *Xinhai* revolution had been “unnecessary and harmful,” *China and the West: A Sketch of their Intercourse* (London, 1925), p.192; Bland: *China*, p.3.

1928 the *North China Daily News* felt able to begin a humorous column in pidgin English. Company journals often printed letters received in broken, bad, or picturesque English from Chinese correspondents.<sup>50</sup>

Western stereotypes based on Chinese subordination were also threatened as the Chinese bourgeoisie grew in wealth and strength in the years before 1927 and made increasing political demands, especially concerning power within the foreign settlements. Leading Chinese figures, such as Yu Xiaqing in Shanghai, were demonised<sup>51</sup> and the legend of the “silent majority” of politically conservative Chinese businessmen, on whose behalf the foreigner was compelled to speak, was actively propagated.<sup>52</sup>

Until the 1930s the conditions of life in rural China which usually offended the sensibilities of travellers were not viewed as the effects of poverty but of the ingrained characteristics of the Chinese. It is also probable that the identifiably growing Western concern for the Chinese peasant - whilst accurately reflecting their numerical dominance in Chinese society - was also related to this dislike of modernized urban China and its elites; this had increasingly been the pattern in British India.<sup>53</sup> The Chinese peasantry was always portrayed as the passive victim of the corruption of the political and military elites.<sup>54</sup>

The underlying theme and one which was also implicit in the position of the China expert and in his use of Chinese “characteristics” was an imperialistic paternalism. The political *status quo* made it usual to assume “the continued supremacy of the white race in the Pacific”;<sup>55</sup> although there was some debate on how the dominant race ought to behave (and whether it had been misbehaving in the past).<sup>56</sup> This paternalism was occasionally expressed in racial terms and frequently as a more general duty of the “West” but was often much more explicit. For some the Chinese, like subjects of the British empire, needed occasional chastisement as if they were naughty children, both

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<sup>50</sup> See also, for example, [Dr.] Neville Whyman, “Pidgin English in China”, 11/1/28, BBC Written Archives Centre, Talks Scripts, Box T 647; Green, *Foreigner in China*, pp.127-41; R.R. Le Fernbach, *A Child's Primer of Things Chinese* (Tianjin, 1923), (This was an adult's satire: “I do not hesitate to say/That Life, for me, in far Cathay,/Is like a Circus evry Day.”, Introduction); *NCH*, 2/6/28, p.401; *The Pipeline*, 8/8/28, p.232; *B.A.T. Bulletin*, May 1925, p.178.

<sup>51</sup> Shanghai No.104, 22/4/30, FO 228/4283/13 69; *NCH*, 27/10/28, p.132 “Persona Non Grata”. Ningbo-born compradore Yu Xiaqing was the founder of the Sanbei [San Peh] shipping company and a prominent community leader in Shanghai. Chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce in 1925 and of the Chinese Ratepayers' Association in 1926, he joined the SMC in 1929, *Who's Who in China* (5th edition, Shanghai, 1936), pp.284-85.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, G.W. Swire to C.C. Scott 22/10/26; T.H.R. Shaw to C.C. Scott 24/12/26; T.H.R. Shaw to Mr Swire, 22/6/25, SP ADD 15; E.J. Nathan to P.C. Young, 16/2/25, Nathan papers, Bod. Eng. Hist.C.420.

<sup>53</sup> The “real India was that of “Princes, Peasants and minority groups”, whilst the urban classes were “unrepresentative”, F.G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, 1967), pp.156, 187.

<sup>54</sup> Bland, *China*, pp.317-24; Sir Meyrick Hewlett, *Forty Years in China* (London, 1943), pp.250-51.

<sup>55</sup> P.T. Etherton, *China: The Facts* (London, 1927), pp.256.

<sup>56</sup> Lady Hosie, *Portrait of a Chinese Lady* (London, 1929), pp.82-83; Bland, *China*, p.4.

individually and as a nation. Consul Hewlett felt that six months as a prep school master taught him “lessons which were of real value in my subsequent relations with the Chinese.”<sup>57</sup>

For others the collapse of Manchu rule left a vacuum which only foreign intervention could fill, as the Chinese people themselves were presently unfitted for self-government. Paternalism softened the image of military intervention, making an altruistic duty out of what otherwise appeared merely to be aggressive imperialism.<sup>58</sup>

These clichés suggested then, that the Chinese were to be distrusted, that they were corrupt, that they were not to be taken seriously, that they had to be treated as if they were an imperial subject race and that their politics lacked any integrity. This negative analysis was intended as a contrast to the standards ascribed to foreign behaviour, and to the situation in the foreign concessions and settlements.<sup>59</sup> It implied that China must be dealt with firmly at a diplomatic level, and that the Chinese were to be distrusted as individuals. It supported the maintenance of the treaty port status quo.

### **Eminent Authorities**

Most of these commentaries were written by writers with direct experience of the treaty ports. They were, after all, superficially the best informed about China. As such they were recommended to those actively seeking such analyses and were widely read. Their authors’ status as treaty port writers, however, meant that their analyses were dominated by an agenda that was far from objective. They wrote, mostly, to support the treaty ports they lived and worked in. These writings on China and the Chinese must be seen in relation to their authors and the roles they played, or felt they played.

Most of these commentators were untrained “experts” or professional writers. Theirs was the approach of the “China-hand”, the professional China-commentator. They assumed that the foundation of any analysis of China lay in knowledge of Chinese “characteristics”, and in a body of salient and *static* facts about the Chinese derived from their racial or cultural history, of which they had a monopoly. They professed a love of China despite, and because of, their critical approaches.<sup>60</sup> They were journalists,

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<sup>57</sup> Hewlett, *Forty Years*, pp.1-3. For the nation see Gilbert, *What’s Wrong*, p.304. This was the language used by General Dyer to justify the massacre in Amritsar in 1919, D. Sayer “British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre 1919-1920”, *Past and Present*, No.131 (May 1991), p.146.

<sup>58</sup> Soothill, *China and England*, pp.217-20; Bland, *China*, p.3. Lenox Simpson insisted that, however politically impractical externally, it would be easy and profitable, for one nation to subdue China (*Why China*, pp.275-79) and by 1927 he was calling for this, *NCH*, 14/5/27, p.290. See also Sayer “British Reactions”, *passim*.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, H.G.W. Woodhead, *Extraterritoriality in China: The Case Against Abolition* (Tianjin, 1929), pp.37-41.

<sup>60</sup> Gilbert, *What’s Wrong*, pp.6-7; Bland, *China*, pp.325-26; Woodhead, *Truth About the Chinese Republic*, pp.10-11.

pamphlet writers and authors. They paraded their knowledge at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and in similar conclaves. They reviewed books and gave radio talks.

Due to the successful self-mythologisation of those who applied the term “China Hand” to themselves and their contemporaries the phenomenon is familiar. This self-image was vital, both to their position in the British community in China, and to their reception by it and by the wider community of interest in Britain.<sup>61</sup> Of Lenox Simpson one newspaper wrote, for example, that he “has to be credited with being a keen observer of Eastern problems. He has studied the mentality of the Oriental.”<sup>62</sup>

The Chinese and their society were felt to be easy to explain, and people quickly set themselves up as informal or formal experts on the basis solely of residence in China, or a little knowledge of it.<sup>63</sup> China had its “Pagett MPs” (after Kipling’s instant expert on Indian questions<sup>64</sup>), brief visitors who came, saw, and wrote with authority on the topic, such as Bertrand Russell, Somerset Maugham, Arthur Ransome, Mrs. Cecil K. Chesterton and Lionel Curtis.<sup>65</sup> China residents affected to scorn such visitors<sup>66</sup> and reserved their praise for those with long-term “experience”, (long enough, at least, to learn the “5,000 Things You Ought to Know About China”). They were few in number and tended to monopolize the transmission of information while attacking competing interpretations, such as those offered by the “missionary cranks at Honolulu” in the Institute of Pacific Relations.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>61</sup> On this topic see, for example, Lo Hui-min, *The Tradition and Prototypes of the China-Watcher* (Canberra, 1978) and Warren I. Cohen, *The Chinese Connection: Roger S. Greene, Thomas L. Lamont, George E. Sokolsky and American-East Asian Relations* (New York, 1978).

<sup>62</sup> *CE*, 25/8/28, p.250.

<sup>63</sup> The “deception of others by means of words employed as promises agreements or treaties” was a “cardinal national characteristic of the Chinese” wrote a Beijing-resident British amateur scholar and professional engineer in an unsolicited letter of advice to Sir Miles Lampson. He lamented the “lack of appreciation of the condition and a tendency to blame present day Chinese for being natural and obeying... one of their most ingrained natural conceptions”, A.J. Moore-Bennett to Lampson, 10/6/28, FO 228/3732/23 3.

<sup>64</sup> *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse: Definitive Edition* (London, 1949), pp.26-27, “Pagett M.P.”. On the wider body of such work see Moore-Gilbert, *Kipling and “Orientalism”*, pp.70-72.

<sup>65</sup> Russell, *Problem of China*, *passim*.; Ransome wrote his *Chinese Puzzle*, after a first, and only, visit of three or four months; Curtis, by no means a China-specialist wrote his eclectic *Capital Question of China* and an earlier unpublished report for the RIIA, and was involved in setting up the Feetham investigation on Shanghai. Russell kept up the interest with the Boxer Indemnity commission with G. Lowes Dickinson, (author of *Letters from John Chinaman*, London, 1902) whose knowledge and experience of China was also minimal, compared to his enthusiasm for it, until they were both removed from it by the Conservative Government of 1924, E.M. Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (London, 1934), pp.153-54. Russell and Dora Black, his companion on the lecture visit to China in 1921-22, continued to publish their opinions on the country, see, for example, their letter to *The Nation and Athenaeum*, 40, No.18, 5/2/27, p.619.

<sup>66</sup> A cynical review of the Padget-ish genesis of Mrs Chesterton’s work *Young China and New Japan* (London, 1933) can be found in *NCH*, 25/10/33, p.124.

<sup>67</sup> Warren Cohen estimated that “fewer than 100 American men and women regularly had the opportunity to offer their opinions on issues relating to East Asia” between 1900 and 1950. By far the majority of these were journalists, missionaries and academics, Cohen, *Chinese Connection*, p.2. The judgement on the IPR came from Sir Sydney Barton, Consul-General in Shanghai from 1922 to 1928, quoted in a minute by Sir Ernest Crowe at the DOT, 8/2/29, FO 228/4044/5 67.

O.M. Green and H.G.W. Woodhead were the leading British newspaper editors and opinion formers on Chinese questions in the treaty ports and in Britain. Woodhead, editor of the standard reference work *The China Year Book* from 1911, edited the *Peking and Tientsin Times* from 1914 to 1930 before moving to Shanghai to write for the *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* and edit his own journal, *Oriental Affairs*. Green was editor of the *North China Daily News* from 1911 to 1930, and correspondent for the *Times* both when in China and when he retired. Both men published widely on Chinese topics and were correspondents for British papers.<sup>68</sup> Rodney Gilbert was an American journalist and editor of the *North China Daily News* during its most virulent phase in 1927;<sup>69</sup> he retired from the staff of the paper in 1929 to great praise.<sup>70</sup> This trio shared their expert's status with, among others, J.O.P. Bland and Bertram Lenox Simpson. These three were professional China commentators, and they were still analysing the Chinese scene in the later 1920s long after the China they initially knew was the subject of history (Simpson was born there and had joined the Chinese Maritime Customs in 1896,<sup>71</sup> Bland went out in 1893 and Gilbert in 1912). Bland was usually dismissed by other commentators after the mid-1920s but still published and was still asked to write reviews and lecture, although he apparently only returned to China once, in 1920, after leaving it in 1910.<sup>72</sup>

These authorities rarely had any professional training; Gilbert went to China as a medical salesman,<sup>73</sup> Bland joined the Chinese Maritime Customs and was then Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Council and agent for the British and Chinese Corporation, combining these posts with journalism and book writing.<sup>74</sup> Most professionals, such as academics, were ex-missionaries, consuls or customs men and this was still considered a natural course for them to take upon leaving these services.<sup>75</sup> Polemicists, sinophiles,<sup>76</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Woodhead, *Journalist in China*, pp.62, 242-43; Green later went on to give BBC radio talks on Chinese affairs, see, for example, *The Listener*, 28/10/31, pp.714-15.

<sup>69</sup> Cohen, *Chinese Connection*, p.296.

<sup>70</sup> *NCH*, 2/3/29, p.345. US Consul-General Cunningham stated that before 1925 he regarded Gilbert as "the best interpreter of Chinese political motives... of any nationality"; E.S. Cunningham to J.V.A. MacMurray No.5873, 2/3/29, NARA Shanghai Post Files 1929 891.

<sup>71</sup> He was the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Beijing from 1911 to 1916; *North China Star*, 13/11/30, p.1.

<sup>72</sup> On Bland see a typically snide comment from Frederick Maze to Sir Charles Addis, Maze papers, Confidential Letters Vol.3, 22/2/29.

<sup>73</sup> Cohen, *Chinese Connection*, p.296.

<sup>74</sup> H. Trevor-Roper, *A Hidden Life: The Enigma of Sir Edmund Backhouse* (London, 1976), p.30, Lo Hui-min, ed., *The Correspondence of G.E. Morrison, Volume I, 1895-1912* (Cambridge, 1976), p.48n1.

<sup>75</sup> E.M. Gull had gone to China to join the Maritime Customs and had then worked as a journalist and as Secretary for the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce and then the China Association in London; while Soothill was a missionary turned academic. Sir R.F. Johnston left the Colonial Service and became Professor of Chinese at London University; E.R. Hughes left the LMS and later taught at Oxford and in the United States; Consul Harding toyed with the idea of applying for the London job and Stella Benson's Customs official husband also thought of this option; Gull, *Facets of the China Question*, pp.xiv-xv; C. Lunt, ed., *The China Who's Who 1924 (Foreign)* (Shanghai, 1924), p.111; *Who Was Who, 1929-1940* (London, 1941), p.1267; *Dictionary of National Biography, 1931-1940* (London, 1949), pp.491-93; *Who*



the off-spring of treaty port families, and frauds complete the professions involved in interpreting China, doing so plainly under the influence of their own untrained favourable or unfavourable prejudices. All of these took strong partisan lines in their political commentaries.<sup>77</sup>

A crucial feature of the China expert was that he was not Chinese, although he could, and did, often refer to Chinese self-criticism. Chinese writers who wrote in English were usually ignored but were not numerous.<sup>78</sup> The good expert, like the good resident generally, kept his distance and avoided compromising the essentials of his British approach; for that very reason it was assumed that a missionary could not make a good expert (A.H. Smith was an exception, but his work was not contemporary commentary). The paradigmatic example lies in the famous library of European-language works on China built up by *Times* journalist and advisor to Yuan Shikai, G.E. Morrison; Morrison himself was unable to speak Chinese.<sup>79</sup>

While there may be some truth in the broad statement by ex-missionary historian K.S. Latourette that “at his best the alien can write with a detachment and perspective which the native can only rarely command,”<sup>80</sup> his claim was only justifiable as a generalisation. In practice the underlying theme of the China expert was more vulgarly paternalistic. With the exception, for obvious reasons, of Hu Shi, the outspoken critic of the *Guomindang* and Chinese culture, those Chinese who could have interpreted China in person - the returned, or the Western-educated, students - were disliked and distrusted. For Woodhead they were “often a menace to a better understanding” of the problems of Sino-Western relations.<sup>81</sup> To allow the validity of their claim to interpret themselves and their society would have questioned treaty port social taboos by implying an equality to the Chinese; it would also have threatened the livelihood of foreign interpreters of China. Chinese commentators would have had a head start linguistically and culturally, and were likely to have been better educated than most of their foreign counterparts.

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*Was Who, 1951-1960* (London, 1961), p.556; the reference to Harding's academic ambitions is in the *Foreign Office Index* (London, 1937), Part 2, p.339; Joy Grant, *Stella Benson* (London, 1987), pp.188, 220-21.

<sup>76</sup> Such as Florence Asycough, author of *A Chinese Mirror* (London, 1930), (“one of the best of all recent publications. It carries one into the heart of things Chinese”, announced one review, *NCSN*, 23/2/30, p.5).

<sup>77</sup> Lady Dorothea Hosie, author of *Two Gentlemen of China* (London, 1924) and *Portrait of a Chinese Lady* was the daughter of missionary turned academic W.E. Soothill and had married Sir Alexander Hosie, a Consular Officer. Sir Edmund Backhouse, the greatest of the frauds was belatedly unmasked in Trevor Roper, *Hidden Life*, *passim*..

<sup>78</sup> Bland, *China*, pp.168-70.

<sup>79</sup> See Morrison's introduction to the *Catalogue of the Asiatic Library of Dr. G.E. Morrison* (Tokyo, 1924), pp.1-2; Cyril Pearl, *Morrison of Peking* (London, 1967), pp.412-13; Trevor-Roper, *Hidden Life*, p.28.

<sup>80</sup> K.S. Latourette, “Interpretations of China by the West”, *Chinese Political and Science Review*, 11, No.2 (October 1927) p.542.

<sup>81</sup> H.G.W. Woodhead, *Current Comment on Events in China: The Extraterritoriality Problem* (Shanghai, 1931), p.16.

It was, then, quite usual for people to claim to know China and the Chinese better than the Chinese themselves. This was a familiar characteristic of such discourses and, after all, the Chinese were their prime object of study.<sup>82</sup> The China experts wrote before the advent of large-scale professional academic research on China, which they were apt to dismiss<sup>83</sup> in preference for their own groups who clustered around the China Society in London and the Royal Asiatic Society [RAS] in Shanghai and their academic publications.<sup>84</sup> At this time foreign papers relied on treaty port community English-language papers and journalists for their news, which meant that news reporting from China not biased towards supporting the position of the treaty port communities was scarce, except during such emergencies as the early months of 1927.<sup>85</sup>

In response to Nationalist criticisms of the editorial policy of the *North China Daily News* in 1929 Green declared that:

he thought in the absence of official opposition some adverse criticism of the Chinese government was good for it and was appreciated by a large number of Chinese whose own opinions were stifled by rigorous control of the press.<sup>86</sup>

The logical extension of this was that the China experts also tended to see themselves as actors (handlers), or possible actors, in events, a notion which reflected their paternalism and their confidence in their approach. "For some millions of roubles... I guarantee to get a pro-British movement in China tomorrow" claimed Bland in 1927.<sup>87</sup> R.F. Johnston, not content with tutoring the Emperor Pu Yi and later governing Weihaiwei, toyed with involvement in Chinese politics.<sup>88</sup> Bertram Lenox Simpson was an advisor to Zhang Zoulin from 1922 to 1925, and was murdered in 1930 after seizing control of the Tianjin customs for Yan Xishan, during the revolt of the Northern Coalition.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> On similar claims in India see Hutchins, *Illusion of Permanence*, pp.155-56. Stella Benson felt Reginald Johnston was "practically Chinese" having "loved and known China from end to end" and even thought in Chinese, Stella Benson to Stephen Hudson, 15/7/30, Schiff papers, BL Add. MSS. 52916.

<sup>83</sup> "Vocational enthusiasm is apt to outweigh the teachings of direct experience and to produce results of a nature to mislead the uninitiated", Bland, *China*, p.163.

<sup>84</sup> Such as the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (North China Branch) [*JRAS*] and the monthly *China Journal of Arts and Sciences* (Shanghai). Elected in 1928, Hu Shi was the first Chinese allowed on the council of the RAS, *JRAS*, 59, (1928), p.viii.

<sup>85</sup> D'Auxion de Ruffé, for example, was correspondent for *Le Matin* and London papers relied heavily on writers from the *North China Daily News*, NARA SMP D4528, "List of Foreign Newspaper Correspondents in Shanghai", 23/2/33. On the press and 1927 see Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, pp.238-41.

<sup>86</sup> "Interview with Mr. Green," Shanghai No.133, 22/4/29, FO 228/3987/5 22z.

<sup>87</sup> During a lecture in London, *NCH*, 30/4/27, p.210.

<sup>88</sup> "I think he occasionally rather likes to think he may play a role as between the various factions, and that he may exercise an influence which in fact he doesn't", Lampson minute 19/4 on R.F. Johnston to Lampson 10/4/28, FO 228/3726/3 2p. On his activities with Puyi see his *Twilight in the Forbidden City* (London, 1934).

<sup>89</sup> It is not exactly clear who shot him, but there were many candidates, *North China Star*, 2/10/30, p.1, 15/11/30, p.1.

In fact experience at handling any type of Orientals was considered useful. In 1929 G.W. Swire suggested sending advisers to the Nationalists:

There must be scores of the right kind of man in India, - Suttons but of the really right type -, who would take on this kind of Chinese Gordon job on their own more or less and gradually make the Chinese think that we were the real friends.<sup>90</sup>

Sir Frederick Whyte, whose career had been previously spent in India, was sent out to China by a number of British companies in 1928. He eventually became an adviser to the National Government.<sup>91</sup> The experts were certainly actively involved in treaty port affairs: Simpson was on the first board of the Shanghai Publicity Bureau in 1927, H.G.W. Woodhead was a founder and leader in the Shanghai British Residents' Association in 1931 and Green its London agent.<sup>92</sup>

The works of the China experts were aimed at populist audiences, at the British community in China of which they were a part, or those in the community of China-interests at home. They both informed and represented the mentality of the treaty port foreigners. There were, of course, exceptions, but it is clear that more people read Rodney Gilbert than Sir Frederick Whyte, however often he was recommended. The volume of negative works far outweighed that of more positive writings.

### Friends of China

It must be remembered that this largely negative image specifically applies to the British community in China. It is not intended to apply to writing about China as a whole, although it pervaded a large part of it. It is also clear that, although for many writers a stated sympathy for China was merely a literary cliché, there were treaty port critics who felt that their criticisms were positive and wrote to present favourable and conciliatory aspects of Chinese life and society to a British audience. Much academic work on Chinese topics in the West was politically disinterested and increasingly of a higher standard. However, in 1930 Latourette criticised the emphases in modern history which he felt served, in a sense, to exoticise China, by concentrating on its ancient philosophy, or marginalise it, by concentrating on what E.R. Hughes called the Western "invasion."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Swire to Mounsey 3/1/28, in FO No.52 16/1/28, FO 228/3880/4 67b. Sir Maurice Amos (Judicial Advisor to the Government of Egypt from 1919-1925) was mentioned as a possible Legal Advisor for the Legation during negotiations over extraterritoriality as he was "a past master at parrying the false analogies and syllogisms of the Western-educated Oriental," Ingram minute on FO No.368 29/10/29, FO 228/4064/220 84.

<sup>91</sup> On Whyte's mission see "Sir Frederick Whyte's Mission to China", Legation Dossier 3h 1928, *passim.*, in FO 228/3737, and the parallel file for 1929 in FO 228/3942 3h.

<sup>92</sup> *NCH*, 30/11/32, p.334.

<sup>93</sup> The pages of the British Library Subject Catalogues for 1921-6 and 1926-30 give an indication of the volume of work published; K.S. Latourette, "Chinese Historical Studies during the Past Nine Years", *American Historical Review*, 35, No.4 (July 1930), p.748; E.R. Hughes, *The Invasion of China by the Western World* (Oxford, 1937).

A great deal of positive reporting was broadcast on BBC radio, and subsequently republished in *The Listener*. In spring and summer 1929 a series of cultural programmes by Lionel Giles were complemented by a series of commentaries on “China Today” by Chinese personalities.<sup>94</sup> Some Britons supported the political aims of the *Guomindang* and the Chinese Communist Party, or were sympathetic to the cause of nationalism.<sup>95</sup> Nationalist Chinese works were published in Britain.<sup>96</sup> *Reportages* concerning foreign treaty port life were generally sensationalist, if not openly hostile, and grew more so in the 1930s.<sup>97</sup> Arthur Ransome’s attack on the “Shanghai Mind” in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1927 was particularly effective, especially in view of the sensitivity shown to his charges by the Shanghai British.<sup>98</sup>

Some Britons went specifically to live in China to experience its culture, and wrote engagingly about their experiences. Harold Acton, Osbert Sitwell and Innes Jackson went to sample the Chinese past and to seek the exotic. There were nascent scholars such as C.P. Fitzgerald and itinerant ones such as William Empson. For John Blofeld the attraction of Beijing was that “so much of the ancient past was still vigorously alive within her walls”. Their “Peking” was that of Sir Edmund Backhouse’s “Décadence Mandchoue”, R.F. Johnston’s *Twilight in the Forbidden City*, and Segalen’s *René Leys*, exotic, erotic and aristocratic.<sup>99</sup> Most of their works were elegiac and rooted in Beijing, but a Beijing largely of their own imagination and selective experience.<sup>100</sup>

Missionaries rather than aesthetes were, superficially, the biggest source of “friendly” material about China. However, the ideology of mission often obscured the widespread denigration of China’s status, Chinese life and culture. This was exacerbated by its altruistic articulation, and a dualistic view of the world which pitted Christian

<sup>94</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, talks records, and *The Listener*, 1929, *passim*.

<sup>95</sup> Such as Bertrand Russell or the communist Independent Labour Party’s Col. C. L’Estrange-Malone, author of the two-part *New China: Report of an Investigation* (London, 1926).

<sup>96</sup> Such as those by T’ang Leang-li [Tang Liangli]: *China in Revolt: how a civilization became a nation* (London, 1927), (with a preface by Bertrand Russell); *The Foundations of Modern China* (London, 1928) and *The Inner History of the Chinese Revolution* (London, 1930).

<sup>97</sup> Maugham, *On a Chinese Screen* (this was republished in 1927); Ransome, *Chinese Puzzle*; on the 1930s see Edmond Egon Kisch, *Secret China* (London, 1935); Hauser, *City for Sale*; Miller, *Shanghai: Paradise of Adventurers*; Peters, *Shanghai Policeman* and Agnes Smedley, *Chinese Destinies: Sketches of Present Day China* (London, 1934).

<sup>98</sup> It was reprinted in his *Chinese Puzzle* (pp.28-32). Shanghai was, according to Lionel Curtis in 1930, “the victim of a legend created by” Ransome, see also SMC Councillor Marden’s comments on Ransome at the 1928 ratepayers annual meeting, *NCH*, 18/2/30, p.256; *Municipal Gazette*, 19/4/28, p.159.

<sup>99</sup> Harold Acton, *Memoirs of An Aesthete* (London, 1948), *Peonies and Ponies* (London, 1941); John Blofeld, *City of Lingering Splendour: A Frank Account of Old Peking’s Exotic Pleasures* (London, 1961), p.13; William Empson, “Teaching English in the Far East”, *London Review of Books*, 17/8/89, pp.17-19; C.P. Fitzgerald, *Why China?: Recollections of China 1923-1950* (Melbourne, 1985), especially pp.152-53; Jackson, *China only Yesterday*; Johnston, *Twilight in the Forbidden City*; Osbert Sitwell, *Escape With Me! An Oriental Sketchbook* (London, 1939); Trevor-Roper, *Hidden Life*, pp.249-59; Victor Segalen, *René Leys*, translated by J.A. Underwood (London, 1990).

<sup>100</sup> For a different narrative of 1920s Beijing see David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley, 1989).

against heathen. Heathenism was fearful, but it was also child-like, a perception which fitted in comfortably with notions of the Chinese character.<sup>101</sup> The missionary enterprise was, by nature, introspective, but it also required a self-confidence which was single-minded and often appeared arrogant. This was especially noticeable in its dismissal of Chinese beliefs and the culture.<sup>102</sup>

Of course, the missionary approach to the Chinese began with the premise that they were, as Quaker Chemistry teacher William Sewell reported, far from perfect and that was one reason for the whole missionary enterprise.<sup>103</sup> Even by 1928 this was recognised as rather an old-fashioned view, at least too old-fashioned to hold in public. Sewell's more colourful and hostile passages were not reprinted in circulated versions of his letters. This form of censorship was common, subjects uncensored included the stock clichés of mission propaganda, such as opium growing.<sup>104</sup> Published missionary writings are not, therefore, generally a reliable source of information about their views towards the Chinese.

Missionary accounts of the Chinese in private and circulated correspondence in the late 1920s were ambiguous and often contradictory. The revulsion exhibited, at cruelty to animals or the apparent "cheapness" of human life, was real but Chinese "faults" were usually perceived as resulting purely from the deficient moral values of the Chinese. William Sewell announced that the "disdain for the Chinese on the part of the foreigners" in Shanghai made him "sick" but in his own judgement the Chinese were decadent, ignorant, childlike, cowardly, dishonest and their civilisation inert, a "jelly-fish". When sufficiently exasperated he would announce that "East is East and West is West and they just won't meet" before denouncing China's "topsy-turvy" nature. When on furlough, however, he lectured widely and effusively on China and on the absolute necessity of British understanding of the Chinese.<sup>105</sup> In later years Sewell, a founder member of SACU and a pro-communist publicist, accepted the primacy of economic factors in many of the areas in which he found the Chinese wanting.<sup>106</sup> At the time his was the disgust of a Briton confronted by practices he believed barbaric and beliefs he felt superstitious. That is, the disgust of a Briton with superior values, a treaty port Briton.

<sup>101</sup> Margaret I. Thomas to Bowser, 24/7/28, BMSA CH/79; Clements to Mrs May, 21/10/32, LMS China Personal Box 13; W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 1/6/27, FSC/CH/5/4.

<sup>102</sup> E.R. Hughes, "A background to the Problem of Christian Literature in China", *International Review of Missions [IRM]*, October 1930, p.523. This is also a problem which some missions have not yet dealt with historiographically, H.R. Williamson, *British Baptists in China, 1845-1952* (London, 1957), pp.331-32; Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910-1942, Volume 2* (London, 1977), p.211.

<sup>103</sup> W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 15/12/29, Sewell Papers, SOAS PP MS 16/3.

<sup>104</sup> Contrast his journal letter of 5/5/28 with the version published in *The World Outlook*, July 1928, p.48, Sewell Papers, SOAS PP MS 16/3.

<sup>105</sup> Sewell, journal letters, 25/3/27, 19/2/27, FSC CH/5/4; journal letters, 5/6/28, 4/11/28, Sewell Papers, SOAS PP MS 16/3; "Engagement Diary", Sewell Papers, SOAS PP MS 16/37.

<sup>106</sup> "Sewell, "Cultural Continuity - The Past in the Present", Talk for Europe China Association at Oxford, July 29 1977, Sewell Papers, SOAS PP MS 16/18.

More positive images of China, then, were available but these were not, largely, the works produced by, and for, the treaty port British. It was the discourse of the commentaries of Gilbert, Woodhead and Bland, which was more influential, and contributed to the processes of socialisation. This discourse was reinforced by the attitudes to China and the Chinese that pervaded fictional media in Britain.

### Fictional Authorities

Fictional works dealt with many of the same issues and characterisations as commentaries. Furthermore, although fiction was primarily a form of relaxation, if “the picture of the interwar Englishman, particularly of the middle class, is incomplete unless we see him reading thrillers, detective stories, and P.G. Wodehouse”, then it is necessary to investigate attitudes to the Chinese expressed in these, and similar writings.<sup>107</sup> Some professional commentators used the fictional form for didactic purposes, as did missionaries,<sup>108</sup> and many others did so indirectly. Fiction was frequently recommended as a source of information on China and, in recognition of its influence, criticised for being misleading:

There are many surprises in store for the man who, having read about the East and dreamed about the East, at last comes East. Fiction about China is notoriously untrustworthy, whether it be in the slander of the silent-gliding, inscrutable villain, or the idealization of romance and oriental splendour.<sup>109</sup>

Fictional works involving and invoking China or the Chinese were common and increased in numbers published (and identifiable), towards the end of the 1920s.<sup>110</sup> They composed a small proportion of total literary production but did form a recognisable and recognised genre with its own conventions. Novels, plays and films must be analysed together. Some stories appeared in all three formats, thereby compounding their popularity and influence. Some of the most popular plays on the London stage of the early part of the century had Chinese themes or settings while the cinema was the major form of entertainment patronised by Britons in the inter-war period.<sup>111</sup>

Certain fictional themes were perennial: most notably a hostility to political change in China after 1911, denigration of the Chinese and Eurasians, and disapproval of

<sup>107</sup> Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, p.391.

<sup>108</sup> Such as J.L. Stewart, *The Goddess of Mercy* (London, 1928); J.C. Keyte, *A Daughter of Cathay* (London, 1926), *Min-San* (London, 1927); *At the Emperor's Behest* (London, 1930).

<sup>109</sup> John Foster, *Chinese Realities* (London, 1928), p.160.

<sup>110</sup> J.B. Powell, “Best Books in English on China”, *CCYB* 1928, pp.380-81. A good bibliography of such fiction is to be found in Tung-Li Yuan, *China in Western Literature: A Continuation of Cordier's Bibliotheca Sinica* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1958), pp.439-58. This is, however, far from complete.

<sup>111</sup> Taylor, *English History*, pp.392-4.

mixed-race liaisons. Many writers also used the familiar clichés about the Chinese, their characteristics and their country, which were informed by and informed the structure of Sino-British personal relations in the treaty ports. Their writings were important channels for the circulation, articulation and, indeed, the development of these clichés. This section will explore works published or seen in London or the Far East in the three decades or so before 1928, and through to the mid-1930s. This selection represents those works likely to have been read specifically by those seeking fictional accounts of China or Chinese, and also those available, in the normal course of events, to the average reader or viewer in the metropole, as a familiar genre within romance, mystery or other fictions. They were so prevalent as to be familiar to all whose work took them to China. Many of the writers were treaty port residents, or had previously been so, or else visited China in search of material.

Most novels set in China or involving the Chinese can be categorised as *roman à clef*, thrillers, or romances. Those not classifiable as “popular” literature were less common. Apart from Pearl Buck’s works, Somerset Maugham’s *The Painted Veil* (1925), André Malraux’s *Man’s Fate* (1934), and Malcom Lowry’s *Ultramarine* (1933) are possibly the only works well-known today. In Maugham and Lowry, however, China was a background of little importance to the themes of the book, although both visited the Far East in search of material, or found it there.<sup>112</sup> Stella Benson lived in China as the wife of a Customs Commissioner. She wrote three novels set in China, in two of these her own eclectic themes were explored in small treaty port locales; the Chinese characters were not important and were dismissively handled. The dismissiveness with which all three writers treated Chinese characters was in itself telling.<sup>113</sup>

Bertram Lenox Simpson, under the pseudonym Putnam Weale, also wrote novels. These dealt with a variety of political topics, such as missions and financial imperialism,<sup>114</sup> and always with the position and attitudes of the foreigner in China. His topically opportunistic fictional discourse (he published none between 1920 and 1927 when the vogue for books on China prompted a resumption) complemented more conventional writings on Chinese and East Asian politics and allowed him the freedom in which to make libellous comments.<sup>115</sup> These novels relied on their romantic interest and

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<sup>112</sup> Maugham, *On a Chinese Screen*, *passim*.; Douglas Day, *Malcom Lowry: A Biography* (London, 1974), pp.90-95.

<sup>113</sup> *Pipers and a Dancer* (London, 1924); *Goodbye Stranger* (London, 1926). The exception, *Tobit Transplanted* (London, 1931), dealt with white Russian refugees in Manchuria.

<sup>114</sup> *The Unknown God* (London, 1911); *The Human Cobweb: A Romance of Old Peking* (London, 1910); *The Eternal Priestess: A Novel of China Manners* (London, 1914).

<sup>115</sup> The critical approach to Missions in *The Unknown God* is echoed in his *Why China Sees Red*, p.115-7; in *The Port of Fragrance* (London, 1930) he was able to label the civilian in charge of the Shamian defence on July 29th 1925 “a sot” and “a drunk”, p.253, this was undoubtedly the Consul-General Sir James Jamieson on whose drunkenness see, Crowe to Wellesley, 21/8/26, FO 800/259.

their appearance as *romans à clef*.<sup>116</sup> This was deliberate: the preface to *Wang the Ninth* (1920) declared that it had the “quality of being true and should therefore be known.”<sup>117</sup> Two novels contrived to describe the setting and working out of the 1911 *Xinhai* revolution,<sup>118</sup> whilst a later trilogy followed the career of a Chinese peasant from Boxer era infancy to a successful career as a warlord.<sup>119</sup>

Other explicitly political writers included Rodney Gilbert whose *The Indiscretions of Lin Mang* (1929) allowed him to cash in on the vogue for atmospheric and informed fiction about China. The book was politically and culturally hostile to China and the Chinese but chose missionaries and supine foreign diplomats as villains to equal corrupt, xenophobic Chinese official-cum-banditdom. It was publicised as “an attempt to depict the Chinese Racial Character, and it is a real contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the Chinese.”<sup>120</sup> J.O.P. Bland’s *Something Lighter* (1924) was a light fiction aimed at the treaty port communities containing gentle satire about the foreign diplomatic enterprise in China and the characteristics of the Chinese. André Malraux’s fiction dealt sympathetically with the Chinese communists and unfavourably with the treaty port communities.<sup>121</sup>

Latterly the most influential and widely-read of these writers was Pearl Buck, whose novels, especially *The Good Earth* (1931), were political in the sense that their subject matter was an unromantic and didactic portrayal of the mass of ordinary Chinese people and their problems.<sup>122</sup> Buck had her Chinese critics, who objected to the subject matter, but also Chinese approval.<sup>123</sup> *The Good Earth* had sold four million copies in the

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<sup>116</sup> The 1923 Lincheng train incident and a one-armed foreign munitions dealer called Shardun (which was “One arm” Sutton’s Chinese name, C. Drage, *General of Fortune: The Story of One-Arm Sutton* (London, 1963), facing p.99) are both central to the plot of *China’s Crucifixion* (London, 1928). One obituarist described his novels as “almost unrivaled in respect to Chinese “atmosphere””, Herbert Chatley, *JRAS*, 62, 1931, p.ii.

<sup>117</sup> *Wang the Ninth: The Story of a Chinese Boy* (London, 1920).

<sup>118</sup> *The Eternal Priestess* and *The Altar Fire or The Story of the Chinese Revolution* (London, 1917).

<sup>119</sup> *Wang the Ninth; Her Closed Hands* (London, 1927), and *China’s Crucifixion*.

<sup>120</sup> Gilbert, *The Indiscretions of Lin Mang* (London, 1929); *Mr Murray’s Notable New Books*, Autumn, 1929.

<sup>121</sup> *The Conquerors* (London, 1929), *Storm in Shanghai [La condition humaine]* (London, 1934). Political writing did not always have the desired effect however, *The Conquerors* was recommended by Bland because it supplied “an extremely vivid account of the character and methods of the handful of Muscovite agents” who engineered the submission of the *Guomindang* “to the purposes of the Third International”, *China*, p.173. This verisimilitude may have been the reason for the existence of a copy in the Foreign Office library.

<sup>122</sup> For an analysis of her influence see Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds*, pp.155-58. On her Chinese reception see Michael H. Hunt, “Pearl Buck - Popular Expert on China, 1931-1949”, *Modern China*, 3, No.1 (January 1977), pp.47-50.

<sup>123</sup> The film of *The Good Earth* (1937) was made in close cooperation with the National Government which recognised its propaganda value and was given a right of veto over its contents, Dorothy Jones, *The Portrayal of China and India on the American Screen, 1896-1955: The Evolution of Chinese and Indian Themes, Locales, and Characters as Portrayed on the American Screen* (Cambridge, Massachusetts), 1955, pp.44-47.



US by 1972, while the film was seen by an estimated sixty-five million viewers. Buck won a Nobel prize for literature.<sup>124</sup>

### Romance and the East

Before Buck the most popular books with Chinese themes were romantic fictions and thrillers. The prolific and popular Louise Jordan Miln, hailed after her death as Pearl Buck's "nearest literary parallel", specialised in tales of the wealthy and aristocratic in China.<sup>125</sup> Her fiction on China and the Chinese began in 1918 with a best-selling novelistic adaptation of the play *Mr Wu* in which an Oxford-educated Mandarin takes his revenge on the family of a young Englishman who has seduced his daughter.<sup>126</sup> For all of Miln's empathic writing and criticisms of individual Western behaviour<sup>127</sup> Wu was a caricatured Chinese sadist who owed much to the then fashionable "eastern" novels with their rape-inclined Arab Sheiks.<sup>128</sup> (The climax of the book involved Wu's 40 page long attempted rape of the Englishman's mother in revenge.) Sino-British romantic and sexual incompatibility and a horror of Eurasian children were themes which dominated her large output of novels.<sup>129</sup> The opening lines of *By Soochow Waters* (1929) announced that "Not every White and Yellow marriage is a failure" but it is soon clear that this childless and companionate exception proved the rule. The message was not always appreciated but the books continued to sell.<sup>130</sup> Other writings developed such themes against the backdrop of the 1900 Legation siege, and Shanghai in 1927.<sup>131</sup> Her politics were anti-Nationalist but generally sympathetic to China; romance mattered more than politics.

Miln had many copyists, such as Mrs P. Connellan who set *Ten Thousand Yesterdays* (1932) amongst anti-Manchu intrigues in the early years of the century; it was a familiar story of failed inter-ethnic marriage and the undesirability of Eurasian children.<sup>132</sup> For other romantic writers China was a convenient exotic backdrop,<sup>133</sup> one

<sup>124</sup> Hunt, "Pearl Buck - Popular Expert on China, 1931-1949", p.33.

<sup>125</sup> S. Kunitz and H. Haycroft, eds., *Twentieth Century Authors* (New York, 1942), p.964.

<sup>126</sup> There were at least 7 editions by 1929, *Mr Wu*, (London, 1929).

<sup>127</sup> For example see, *Mr Wu* (London, 1918), p.144, 187-216.

<sup>128</sup> Billie Melman, *Women and the Popular Imagination in the Twenties: Flappers and Nymphs* (London, 1988), pp.90-96.

<sup>129</sup> Miln, *Mr Wu*, pp.82-86; *Ruben and Ivy Sen* (London, 1925) chronicled the misfortunes of two Eurasian children living in London. For one account of the influence and resonance of her fiction see John Espey, *Strong Drink, Strong Language* (Santa Barbara, California, 1990), pp.39-57.

<sup>130</sup> *By Soochow Waters* (London, 1929), pp.9, 12; It was "Worth reading because of its beautiful descriptions of Chinese life and moods... As a discussion of interracial marriage it is not, however, very convincing", *CR*, April 1930, p.251.

<sup>131</sup> *It Happened in Peking* (London, 1926); *The Flutes of Shanghai* (London, 1928).

<sup>132</sup> Mrs Percival (Marguerite) Connellan, *Ten Thousand Yesterdays* (London, 1932). Edith Wherry took Kipling's lines from "The Ballad of East and West" (*Verse*, Definitive Edition, pp.234-38) about the twain never meeting, as the motto for her Boxer uprising tale *The Red Lantern* (London, 1911), in which an embittered Eurasian revenges himself on foreigners by conspiring with the Boxers, whilst a Eurasian woman, hopelessly in love with a European, is "reclaimed" by China. Male writers also dealt with these romantic themes: Claude A. Rees, *Chun Ti-Kung, His Life and Adventures* (London, 1896); Shanghai-born Carroll Lunt described a doomed affair between an American and a stereotypically passive and loyal

known from personal experience,<sup>134</sup> or one which offered a little geographical variety after the fashionable and salacious “desert” novels. Joan Conquest’s *Forbidden* (1927) offered a blatantly pornographic exploration of the theme by a one-time Peking resident.<sup>135</sup> Floridly speaking Chinese characters and a gushing enthusiasm for the splendours and mysteries of Asia characterise most of these books, except those written for missionary purposes.<sup>136</sup> There were also copyists who combined Pearl Buck’s gritty realism with sentimentality and sensationalism.<sup>137</sup>

### Treaty Port Fiction

Many of the fictions already discussed were written with first hand knowledge of contemporary China. Such experience was often exaggerated for publicity purposes, such as by André Malraux, who got no closer to Shanghai than 3 months in Hong Kong in 1925. Buck was a missionary child, and married a mission educationalist. Simpson, Gilbert and Bland made much use of their journalistic or professional experiences in China. J.W. Bennett lived in Beijing with his novelist wife Dorothy Graham where resided, for eighteen months, Ann Bridge, in life the wife of the one-time British Legation Counsellor Owen O’Malley.<sup>138</sup>

Some of them attempted to depict, in epic and propagandistic form, the development of the foreign presence in China, or its “daily round.”<sup>139</sup> This fiction complemented the more straightforward propaganda histories or descriptions of the foreign presence. The lighter fiction of treaty port life restricted itself to tales of Chinese servants or the stock figures of foreign caricature, the Compradore, the Shroff, and the

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Chinese girl in *His Chinese Idol* (London, 1921). See also H.G. Woodworth, *Where the Twain Meet*, (London, 1926) and *In the Shadow of Lantern Street* (London, 1927).

<sup>133</sup> Anne Duffield, *The Lacquer Couch* (London, 1928); *Lantern Light* (London, 1933).

<sup>134</sup> “Lenox Fane’s” *Legation Street* (London, 1925), was more of a travelogue than the novel it claimed to be.

<sup>135</sup> That which was “forbidden” was interracial marriage and sex; however, here the trapped, rape-threatened white woman changes her mind about refusing, Conquest, *Forbidden* (London, 1927), pp.49-55. On her residence in Peking see her *An Eastern Lover* (London, 1928), publisher’s note. On the “eastern” novelists see Melman, *Women and the Popular Imagination*, pp.89-104.

<sup>136</sup> Such as the loose trilogy of Edith Wherry, *The Red Lantern*, *The Wanderer on a Thousand Hills* (London, 1918), and *Jade Mountain* (London, 1926).

<sup>137</sup> E. Leavelle, for example, whose *Lustrous Heroine* (London, 1934) was set “against a terrible background of horror, famine, lust, and opium smoking” (publisher’s note); her *Blind Harvest* (London, 1935) ended with an execution by slow strangulation.

<sup>138</sup> Axel Madsen, *Silk Roads: The Asian Adventures of Clara and André Malraux* (London, 1990), pp.221-23. On Buck see Hunt, “Pearl Buck - Popular Expert on China”, pp.33-64; D. Graham, *Through the Moon Door: The Experiences of an American Resident in Peking* (London, 1928); Ann Bridge, *Facts and Fictions* (London, 1968), pp.33-40.

<sup>139</sup> Dorothy Graham, *The China Venture* (London, 1929); Alice Tisdale Hobart, *Pidgin Cargo* (London, 1929); Veronica and Paul King, *The Commissioner’s Dilemma: An International Tale of the China of Yesterday* (London, 1929), forward.

comic-opera general.<sup>140</sup> For the popular Alicia (Mrs. Archibald) Little, China was either an incidental backdrop or a hostile one.<sup>141</sup> Ann Bridge wrote about China in three of her popular romantic novels. The Chinese portrayed were either servants, bandits or warlords. She wrote the first at the suggestion of a publisher and the half-finished manuscript was accepted immediately, largely because of its subject matter. She had already discovered and exploited the periodical market's thirst for writings on China.<sup>142</sup>

Another treaty port genre was more salacious. W. Carleton Dawe wrote, often in a Conradian fashion, of sexual relations between white men and Asian women. His style was popular, and copied by Simpson and "William A. Rivers".<sup>143</sup> The tragedy and violence were compounded if the story involved Chinese men and European women. Dawes' other adventures reprised Guy Boothby's popular *Doctor Nikola* (1896); they featured secret societies and a great deal of torture, and were characteristically sinophobic.<sup>144</sup> Like many other informed writers, his apparently "informed" fiction actually owed more to the clichés of uninformed popular fiction. So prevalent and recognisable were these constructs that it was difficult for treaty port writers to write without reference to them.

### Thrillers and "Yellow Perils"

Apart from these specific tales of China the Chinese featured pervasively in British popular fiction and these popular stereotypes influenced, and were influenced by, in a circular relationship, the more informed works. From the early 1900s the Chinese story always had its place in collections of mysteries and was a familiar theme in thriller novels.<sup>145</sup> The most successful of these were the works of Sax Rohmer (Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward). Rohmer's inspiration was purely opportunistic: the *Xinhai* revolution and contemporary reports on crime in Limehouse, east London, (one of which he

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<sup>140</sup> Jay Denby, *Letters of a Shanghai Griffin to his father* (Shanghai, 1910, London 1911, 1923); Daniel Varé, *The Maker of Heavenly Trousers* (London, 1935), and *The Gate of Happy Sparrows* (London, 1937); J.O.P. Bland, *Houseboat Days in China* (London, 1919), and *Something Lighter* (London, 1924).

<sup>141</sup> *A Millionaire's Courtship* (London, 1906); *A Marriage in China* (London, 1896); *Out in China!* (London, 1902).

<sup>142</sup> Ann Bridge, *Peking Picnic* (London, 1932); *The Ginger Griffin* (London, 1934); *Facts and Fictions*, pp.35-42.

<sup>143</sup> Dawe, *Yellow and White* (London, 1895), *Kakemonos: Tales of the Far East* (London, 1897); Simpson, *Forbidden Boundary*; Rivers (Veronica and Paul King), *Anglo-Chinese Sketches* (London, 1903).

<sup>144</sup> Dawe, *The Mandarin* (London, 1899); *The Yellow Man* (London, 1900); *The Plotters of Peking* (London, 1907).

<sup>145</sup> See, for example, J. Leroux, *Big Book of Mystery Stories* (New York, 1927) ("The Death Gong") which had the moustached head of a leering "Chinaman" on the cover; *Thrills: Twenty Specially Selected New Stories of Crime, Mystery and Horror* (London, n.d.) (Thomas Burke's "The Golden Gong") and H. De Wint, "A Celestial Hell" in C.C. Thomson, ed., *Gruesome Cargoes* (London, 1928), pp.131-41.

researched himself in 1911) built on yellow peril ideas that had been popularised by reactions to the 1900 Boxer rebellion; as Rohmer is recorded as saying, “Conditions for launching a Chinese villain on the market were ideal.”<sup>146</sup> His first “Fu Manchu” story was serialised in 1912-13 and launched a villain with all the:

cruel cunning of the entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources of a wealthy government - which, however, already has denied all knowledge of his existence... Dr Fu-Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man.<sup>147</sup>

The Chinese were portrayed as cruel, exceptionally clever, and out to destroy the “White race”. Most of the stories were set in Limehouse. The Fu Manchu books continued to appear throughout the next five decades although there was a seven-year hiatus before interest in themes Chinese was re-kindled by the Nationalist revolution and a magazine in the United States commissioned a new Fu Manchu.<sup>148</sup> Their popularity was exploited and strengthened by the many films made from them and through the copyists of the 1930s.<sup>149</sup> There were three major silent adaptations of Fu Manchu stories and these were continued in the sound era with a Paramount series.<sup>150</sup> The key selling point of the films was the motif of the cruel Chinese, as was shown in the advertising for the start of the 1924 series in which: “In the Underground stations, all over London, larger than life sized posters depicted the leering visage and clutching hands of the Devil Doctor”.<sup>151</sup> Rohmer also took advantage of Limehouse’s post-Great War notoriety to write more particular, and equally influential, works about that area in which drug smuggling, “white slavery” and

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<sup>146</sup> Quoted in R.E. Briney, ed., C. Van Ash and E.S. Rohmer, *Master of Villainy: A Biography of Sax Rohmer*, (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1972), p.75, on his journalism see pp.73-74. See also a partial exploration of this theme in Clive Bloom “West is East: Nayland Smith’s Sinophobia and Sax Rohmer’s Bank Balance”, in C. Bloom, ed., *Twentieth Century Suspense: The Thriller Comes of Age* (London, 1990), pp.22-36.

<sup>147</sup> *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu* (London, 1913), p.23.

<sup>148</sup> Briney, *Villainy*, p.170. The first three were reprinted in one volume in 1929 as *The Book of Fu-Manchu: A Complete and Detailed account of the amazing criminal activities of this sinister Chinaman* (London, 1929). A much shorter and bowdlerised version of the first book was printed as a Collins English Library Level Three English primer in 1988 in Glasgow.

<sup>149</sup> On the copyists see Wu, *Yellow Peril*, pp.183-206. See also, impressionistically, the pulp covers reprinted in P.M. Haining, ed., *The Art of Mystery and Detective Stories: The Best Illustrations from Over a Century of Crime Fiction*, (London, 1986), pp.108, 144.

<sup>150</sup> *The Yellow Claw* (1921), *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu* (1923), *The Further Adventures of Dr Fu-Manchu* (1924). The paramount films starred, at one point, Boris Karloff, whose brother, Sir John T. Pratt was consular adviser to the Far East Department of the Foreign Office and involved in efforts to undo the sort of damage that the Fu Manchu idea did to perceptions of the Chinese, see below, Chapter 4; Leslie Halliwell, *Halliwell’s Film Guide* (7th edition, London, 1989), p.383.

<sup>151</sup> Briney, *Master of Villainy*, p.157. This caricature surfaced often, on the covers of M.P. Shiel’s *Yellow Danger* (London, 1989) and *The Dragon* (London, 1913) for example, where queue-wearing Chinese reach out to grasp the globe, on the cover of the 1929 *Book of Fu Manchu*, and the title page of the American edition of *The Insidious Dr Fu-Manchu*, on the cover of J. Leroux’s, *Big Book of Mystery Stories*, and, not leering for once, on the cover of the 1923 edition of Jay Denby’s *Letters of a Shanghai Griffin* (Shanghai).

opium dens played major roles in varying proportions.<sup>152</sup> His marketing of things Chinese further extended to music-hall songs and even to the creation of a perfume, called “Honan”, manufactured by a Chinese workforce in Limehouse and launched with opium-redolent packaging and publicity in 1919.<sup>153</sup>

Rohmer’s opportunism mirrored that of one of the inventors of the yellow peril novel, the fantasy writer M.P. Shiel. He was asked to “do a war serial” when “some trouble broke out in China” in 1898 and wrote what became *The Yellow Danger*, a tale of a Chinese invasion of Europe.<sup>154</sup> Such timely opportunism characterised his other works.<sup>155</sup> Apocalyptic yellow peril fictions were a familiar and continuing genre.<sup>156</sup>

Most writings inspired by the “Fu Manchu” vogue were thrillers. Edgar Wallace, one of the best-selling popular authors of his day, devoted a tiny but telling proportion of his immense output to Chinese themes. *The Tomb of Ts’in* (1916) set in London and China involved secret societies, puzzlingly ingenious murders and bitter Eurasians battling with a British adventurer to find the tomb of Qinshihuangdi. There was sadistic cruelty and sexual salaciousness, and the same ingredients can be found in all his Chinese-ish works.<sup>157</sup> Rohmer dealt in the broad, imaginary generality of the yellow peril but Wallace was more explicitly sensationalist and racist.<sup>158</sup> The cover of one 1929 collection [see figure 3, following page] is a powerful indication of the manner in which Wallace used the theme of inter-racial sex.<sup>159</sup>

Wallace was equally aware of Chinese newsworthiness. He changed the villain of his crown-jewel stealing, and white-woman kidnapping *The Traitor’s Gate* (1927) from

<sup>152</sup> Such as *The Yellow Claw* (London, 1915), and *Dope: A Story of Chinatown and the Drug Traffic* (London, 1919), which claimed to be an exposé of a drug smuggling scandal; see also *Tales of Chinatown* (London, 1922) and *Yu’an Hee See Laughs* (London, 1932). For one copyist see S.C. George, *The Secret Six* (London, 1940). The notoriety was sparked off by a scandal in November 1918 when a music hall actress, Billie Carlton, died of a cocaine overdose; this lead police to uncover a thriving drug sub-culture in the capital, *The Times*, 13/12/18, p.3; 14/12/18, p.5; 21/12/18, p.5.

<sup>153</sup> For examples of Rohmer’s songs see *Catalogue of Reynold’s Musical Monologues*, n.d. [c.1914-1918]; Briney, *Master of Villainy*, pp.112-16.

<sup>154</sup> M.P. Shiel, “About Myself”, A.R. Morse, *The Works of M.P. Shiel: A Study in Bibliography* (Los Angeles, 1948), p.5.

<sup>155</sup> In 1913 he rehashed similar elements, possibly in competition with Fu Manchu, in *The Dragon* which was republished as *The Yellow Peril* in 1929. In the late 1930s he revised *The Yellow Danger* for planned publication as *China in Arms*. It was rejected by various publishers as anachronistic, not because of the theme, apparently, but because it was written before the era of modern warfare, Morse, *Shiel*, pp.40-41.

<sup>156</sup> S.N. Sedgewick’s *The Last Persecution* (London, 1909) had Christians burnt at the stake in Trafalgar Square in an attempted Confucianisation of a conquered Britain; Robert Allen’s *Captain Gardiner of the International Police: A Secret Service Novel of the Future* (London, 1917) described a war between the civilised West and “a secret association which controls the government of China” and the rest of the East, [p.61]. Variations on these themes can be found in Luke Netterville, *The Queen of the World or Under the Tyranny* (London, 1900); Luigi Motta, *The Princess of the Roses* (London, 1919); Gawain Edwards, *The Earth Tube* (London, 1929); Edmund Snell, *The Sign of the Scorpion* (London, 1935), *Yellow Jacket: The Return of Chanda-lung* (London, 1936).

<sup>157</sup> E. Wallace, *The Tomb of Ts’in* (London, 1916), pp.54, 77, 282-85.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p.160.

<sup>159</sup> E. Wallace, *The Governor of Chi-Foo* (London, 1929).

an Indian prince to a Chinese governor when the novel was staged as a musical drama, *The Yellow Mask*, in 1928 (it was filmed in 1931). The revival of news interest was also responsible for the yellow-peril plot of *The Yellow Snake* (1929). Wallace's novels were formulaic and escapist but the venom with which his Chinese villains were treated is striking.<sup>160</sup>

Other thriller writers loaded their works with political messages. Beijing resident James W. Bennett's writing was politically hostile to Chinese nationalism and mixed topicality, verisimilitude, apparent "inside knowledge" and romance. *The Yellow Corsair* (1928) involved Bias Bay piracy, kidnapping and the Shamian incident of July 1925.<sup>161</sup> The Chinese were portrayed as xenophobic, cowardly, cruel and corruptly unpatriotic. The Shamian shooting was blamed on Russian Bolsheviks whilst some of the characterisation of the Chinese is reminiscent of Rohmer. The work's violence and clichés about racial instinct pervaded Bennett's other novels.<sup>162</sup>

Warren Hill's thrillers written with an obvious first-hand knowledge of Shanghai, were full of Fu Manchu-like secret societies and murders, stolen jewels, bitter, sadistic Eurasians and improbable rock-chambers under the Shanghai bund.<sup>163</sup> Several of the thrillers of A.H. Mills were set in China as a result of his short period of army service there. *Intrigue Island* (1930), for example, involved the defeat of a Chinese plot to

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<sup>160</sup> M. Lane, *Edgar Wallace: The Biography of a Phenomenon* (London, revised edition, 1964), pp.233-36.

<sup>161</sup> *The Yellow Corsair* (London, 1928), p.126.

<sup>162</sup> *Son of the Typhoon* (London, 1929); *Manchu Cloud* (London, 1929). Another timely thriller set in Shanghai with the usual cast of Bolsheviks was Lieut. Col. W.P. Drury, *The Flag Lieutenant in China* (London, 1929). This was one of a popular series of books and was quickly filmed.

<sup>163</sup> "Warren Hill" (probably a pseudonym) *Yellow Will Out* (London, 1929) (the title referred to the leading Eurasian villain); *That Which is Crooked* (London, 1930) and *The Crystal Skull* (London, 1930).



overthrow the British administration in Hong Kong. His books were hostile in tone to the Chinese who were portrayed as dirty, sadistic, and xenophobic, their menfolk were sexually repulsive whilst their daughters fell in love with British men. The white villains in the books were Portuguese or, it finally transpired, Eurasians.<sup>164</sup> The Chinese often turned up as villains in other novels set in South and South East Asia.<sup>165</sup>

Different Chinese and a different Limehouse, more realistic, sentimental and interracial, was a major source of inspiration for Thomas Burke. His books on the theme, beginning with the best-selling *Limehouse Nights* in 1917, were not thrillers but dealt in a “realist”<sup>166</sup> fashion with much the same drug-filled settings as Rohmer’s and were also seized upon as film material. Burke himself claimed a childhood involvement with the Limehouse community.<sup>167</sup> Burke’s Chinese were invariably more human than Rohmer’s, were usually poor and usually sexually attracted to white women.<sup>168</sup> He was much copied and filmed although his portrayal of Limehouse also drew objections.<sup>169</sup> These books and the themes they touched on were taken up elsewhere; in boys’ comics, such as Edwy Searles Brooks’ *St Franks in London* (c.1926) which involved opium dens and drug smuggling and cruel queue-wearing Chinese, and in films such as the Arnold Bennett-scripted *Piccadilly* (1929), which portrayed “Limehouse” and had, as a villainess, a cruel Chinese dancer played by Anna May Wong. American Chinatown stories and films were also available.<sup>170</sup>

Another familiar sensationalist genre was the pirate book or bandit-captive memoir. “Bok’s” *Vampires of the China Coast* (1932) was not the first<sup>171</sup> but was certainly the most powerful of these - a fiction illustrated with gruesome photographs, it

<sup>164</sup> A.H. Mills, *From Piccadilly to Devil’s Island* (London, 1932), p.16; *The Yellow Dragon* (London, 1924), pp.98, 272; *Intrigue Island* (London, 1930). Other thriller writers with obvious first-hand knowledge included Geoffrey Ellinger (*The Ricksha Clue*, London, 1931) and Gilbert Collins (*Chinese Red*, London, 1932).

<sup>165</sup> E. Snell, *The Yellow Seven* (London, 1923), and *The Yu-Chi Stone* (London, 1925); George Varney, *The Bungalow of Dead Birds* (London, 1929).

<sup>166</sup> As his editor claimed, *Twinkletoes: A Tale of Chinatown* (Readers Library Publishing Company edition, London, 1927), Editor’s Note, p.ii; *Limehouse Nights: Tales of Chinatown*, (London, 1917).

<sup>167</sup> *The Wind and the Rain: A Book of Confessions* (London, 1924), pp.9-23.

<sup>168</sup> See, e.g. “The Chink and the Child”, “The Father of Yoto” and “The Pain”, in *Limehouse Nights*; *The Song Book of Quong Lee of Limehouse* (London, 1920) and *Twinkletoes*.

<sup>169</sup> His “The Chink and the Child” was filmed as *Broken Blossoms* in 1919 and 1936, and *Twinkletoes* in 1927. For copyists see, for example, Dorota Flatau, *Pong Ho: A Volume of Stories* (London, 1924); or “The Ginger Jar”, in *The Tales of Elinor Mordaunt* (London, 1934). One objector was J.G. Birch, *Limehouse Through Five Centuries* (London, 1930), p.11.

<sup>170</sup> E.S. Brooks, *St Franks in London: A Jolly Yarn of Schoolboy Life and Adventure in the City*, The Monster Library of Complete Stories No.8 (London, c.1926). Other Limehouse films included *Limehouse Blues* (1934) and the 1935 comedy *Stormy Weather*. On American Chinatowns see Robert Simpson, *Welcome Danger!* (London, 1930); L. De Bra, *Ways that are Wary* (London, 1924) and such films as *Welcome Danger!* (1930) and *East is West* (1930).

<sup>171</sup> See also, for example, R.J. Bakewell, *The Lost Tribute: A Tale of the China Seas* (London, 1926); H. Kingsley, *Kong* (London, 1927); H. Kingsley, *The Fifth God* (London, 1928); Bennett, *Yellow Corsair*; “Taffrail”, *Pirates* (London, 1929); Aleko E. Lilius, *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates* (London, n.d. c.1930), Dudley Lenton, *The Blue Mandarin: A Story of Naval Adventure in the China Seas* (London, 1938).



combined scenes of physical and sexual violence and sadism in a supposed *roman à clef*.<sup>172</sup> The non-fictional works dealt less explicitly with the same topics.<sup>173</sup> The boundary between fiction and non-fiction was blurred here, as it was in the salacious “white-slave trade” exposés of Henri Champly<sup>174</sup> or the later adventure works of Charles Low;<sup>175</sup> Bok’s salacious portrayal was not far removed from respectable commentators, such as E.M. Gull, who paid particular attention to the prevalence in China of “sexual licentiousness, in open association with cruelty.”<sup>176</sup>

The monthly, popular, Sexton Blake Library published several stories with Chinese villains over the years which used most of these clichés: pirates, Limehouse opium dens, secret societies led by master-minds trying to conquer the “cursed white pigs”, temple harems, kidnapped white girls and stolen religious icons. The stories were frequently accompanied by fact-pages which confirmed the veracity of the background of the stories, and lurid cover art emphasising the stereotyped features of evil “Chinamen”: queues, sneers and sneakiness.<sup>177</sup> The popular “Yank mags”, widely available in Britain, such as *Detective Story Magazine*, also published such stories.<sup>178</sup>

*Reportages* and memoirs, especially those aimed at more popular audiences, frequently mirrored these fictions and conveyed many of the same clichés. An exposé of the drugs trade peddled the canard of “yellow plots” to undermine “the white race through “dope” and when the time was ripe... command the world”. One policeman’s memoirs described Limehouse as “ruled by a judicial system of its own, and one of horribly callous cruelty and indifference”. Both books denigrated “miscegenation”.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *Vampires of the China Coast* (London, 1932). It was such a successful formula that “Bok” kept repeating it: *Tong* (London, 1933); *Corsairs of the China Seas* (London, 1936); *Dragons to Slay* (London, 1937); *Piracies, Ltd.* (London, 1938).

<sup>173</sup> H.J. Howard, *Ten Weeks with Chinese Bandits*, (London, 1927); C. Jones, *Pirate Junk: Five Months Captivity with Manchurian Bandits* (London, 1934); Tinko Pawley, *My Bandit Hosts* (London, 1935).

<sup>174</sup> Champly, *Road to Shanghai* and *White Women, Coloured Men*.

<sup>175</sup> *Secret Asia* (London, 1939); *Great Asiatic Mysteries* (London, 1937).

<sup>176</sup> Gull, *Facets*, p.118.

<sup>177</sup> Sexton Blake Library (G.H. Teed), *The Yellow Tiger!* (London, 1915); *The Case of the Yellow Pearls!* (London, 1925), “The China Coast Today”, p.64; *The Tiger of Canton* (London, 1927), p.64, “The Law of the Dragon”; *The Yellow Skull* (London, 1931), “Chinese Bandits”, p.64; *The Chinatown Mystery* (London, 1932), “Haunts of Chinatown”, p.64; *Murder in Manchuria* (London, 1934), etc..

<sup>178</sup> A favourite in this magazine, for example, was A.E. Apple’s “Master Criminal of the Century”, Mr Chang: “cruel, diabolical, cunning and pitiless” and pitted against a “hardly less clever Chinese detective, Doctor Ling”; two stories had been printed by 1928, *Mr Chang’s Crime Ray* and *Mr Chang of Scotland Yard*. Both of these were also published in book form in the United States, *Detective Story Magazine*, 3/11/28, inside back cover. On the popularity of these magazines see Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and Reading Public* (London, 1932, 1939 edition) p.14. and George Orwell, “Boys’ Weeklies”, *Collected Essays* (London, 2nd edition, 1961), p.88-89.

<sup>179</sup> E. Murphy, *The Black Candle* (Toronto 1922, London, 1926), pp.189, 45, photos opposite pp.30, 46. Ex-Detective Inspector Herbert T. Finch, *Traitors Within* (London, 1933), p.200, see also pp.205-207 on Chinese secret societies.

## Theatre

In the theatre “crook” plays were very popular in the late 1920s and plays with Chinese villains were prominent enough to be regarded as clichéd.<sup>180</sup> Matheson Lang’s *Mr Wu*, had been an instant success (403 performances from 1913 and 114 in 1922),<sup>181</sup> and provided the model villain, although it was originally conceived of as a realistic antidote to “the usual stage Chinaman”<sup>182</sup> because it showed a Western-dressed and educated Hong Kong Chinese on the stage. Like many novelists the authors were at pains to point out the truthfulness of their portrayal with asides in the script justifying Wu’s actions; the “hypnotic influence of the Chinese is an actual fact, experienced every day by Europeans even in business dealings with them,” went one example.<sup>183</sup> Wu was free from the aphoristic-quipping mandarin quaintness of L.M. Lion’s *The Chinese Puzzle* (1918), which gave away a booklet of “Proverbs and Aphorisms from East and West” as an advertising gimmick.<sup>184</sup> *Mr Wu*’s success relied on two aspects of the villain’s character that were Rohmer-ish: ingenious cruelty and control of a powerful organisation. This combination had other copyists.<sup>185</sup> Lang himself recreated his figure in *The Chinese Bungalow* (1929) while “Sapper” (Cyril McNeile) swapped his post-war Bolshevik villains for more contemporary Chinese in *The Way Out* (1930), in which the seeming pillar of respectability in British colony, Choo Lung, turns out to be:

a crafty, incomprehensible Chinaman, cunning and diabolically cruel beneath a veneer of Western education,... engaged in anti-British propaganda.<sup>186</sup>

Matheson Lang reprised his roles in films of *Mr Wu* (1919) and *The Chinese Bungalow* (1926 and 1930). *Mr Wu* was remade in 1927 in the US and a BBC radio version was broadcast in 1928.<sup>187</sup>

In Maugham’s long running drama *The Letter* (1927 for 338 performances and filmed in 1929) the leading Chinese character was a blackmailer praised by one critic as

<sup>180</sup> “At the time of writing [1928], the form of entertainment commonly known as “the crook play” is ruling the dramatic world both in Great Britain and the United States”, P.S. Barry, *How to Succeed as a Playwright* (London, 1928). p.61.

<sup>181</sup> *Who’s Who in the Theatre*, 14th edition (London, 1967), p.1535.

<sup>182</sup> Matheson Lang, *Mr Wu Looks Back: Thoughts and Memories* (London, 1941), p.112.

<sup>183</sup> *Mr Wu*, H. Owen and H. Vernon, Note, p.16, Script, British Theatre Association Library, Theatre Museum. Joan Conquest was so anxious to convince readers of the veracity of her asides about Chinese tortures and cruelty that footnotes were placed to state that they had been “seen by the writer”, *Forbidden*, pp.28, 61.

<sup>184</sup> Theatre Museum, Production File [after this TMPF], New, 11/7/18 and 27/1/19, *The Chinese Puzzle*, M. Bower and L.M. Lion.

<sup>185</sup> TMPF, Queens, 8/8/25, *The Man From Hong Kong*, Mrs Clifford Mills; J.G. Brandon and G. Pickett, *The Silent House*, TMPF, Comedy, 8/6/27; R. Berkeley, *Listeners*, TMPF, Wyndhams, 9/2/28; and *The Moving Finger* [anon], TMPF, Garrick, 28/8/28.

<sup>186</sup> TMPF, Comedy, 23/1/30, *The Way Out*, “Sapper”, *Times Review*, 24/1/30.

<sup>187</sup> *CET*, 19/1/28, p.38.

“a little masterpiece of smug, half-Westernised orientalism”.<sup>188</sup> *East of Suez* (1922) featured an unsympathetic and cruel Chinese returned student who was used to conjure up Yellow Peril imagery.<sup>189</sup> The intent of the play as one critic saw it was to prove, again, that “East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet - except to their mutual discomfort”.<sup>190</sup> Salacious and sadistic use of sexual and racial themes reached its apogée in John Colton’s *The Shanghai Gesture* (1926), which was banned by the Lord Chamberlain but allowed a Sunday performance under club conditions in 1929.<sup>191</sup>

Most American films would be seen in Britain and the categories of films about Chinese identified in Hollywood productions are relevant for British output as well: these have been identified as serial films with Oriental villains, Chinatown films, those dealing with interracial relationships,<sup>192</sup> warlord films such as *Shanghai Express* (1932), which was based on the 1923 Lincheng train hijack,<sup>193</sup> and the realistic films of the 1930s.<sup>194</sup> The range of stereotypes in these was small and either unfriendly or condescending. An exception, such as *Broken Blossoms*, which was favourable to its Chinese character, still conveyed an ultimately negative message about interracial love. These genres were also the genres of fiction and theatre, from which they originated, or with which they were closely linked (novelisations of films were a new and popular literary form). Changing fashions in these other forms were also represented in film.

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<sup>188</sup> Anon., *The Times*, 25/2/27, p.12, quoted in A. Curtis and J. Whitehead, eds., *W. Somerset Maugham: The Critical Heritage* (London, 1987), pp.251, 253-54.

<sup>189</sup> “What will become of your superiority when the yellow man can make as good guns as the white and fire them as straight? You have appealed to the machine-gun and by the machine-gun you shall be judged.”, Maugham, *Collected Plays, Volume III*, p.192.

<sup>190</sup> D. MacCarthy, *New Statesman*, 7/10/22, quoted in Curtis and Whitehead, *Somerset Maugham*, pp.242-44. A young Englishman marries a Eurasian girl who unbeknown to him, has been previously engaged to his best friend and restarts that affair. She is portrayed as excitable, and arbitrary. At the end of the play “The jungle takes back its own” and dressing in Manchu clothing she “takes a black pencil and touches her eyebrows. She gives them a slight slant so that she looks on a sudden absolutely Chinese”. At the end of the play she sits silently and “contemplates in the glass the Chinese woman of the reflection”. Maugham, *Collected Plays, Volume III*, pp.218-19.

<sup>191</sup> TMPF, Scala, *The Shanghai Gesture*, J. Colton, 13/5/29; it was published as *The Shanghai Gesture: A Play* (New York, 1926).

<sup>192</sup> Such as *Shanghai*, 1935.

<sup>193</sup> This prominent hit starred Marlene Dietrich and Anna May Wong. The Lincheng hijack took place when the Tianjin-Pukou train was held up by bandits and a large party of foreign and Chinese passengers were kidnapped and held hostage for some weeks. For full details of the incident and its international repercussions see Chan Lau Kit-Ching, “The Lincheng Incident: a case study of British policy in China between the Washington Conference (1921-22) and the Nationalist Revolution (1925-28)”, *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 10, No.2 (1972), pp.172-86. See also *The Bad Man* (1930), remade as *West of Shanghai* (Warlord) in 1941.

<sup>194</sup> Jones, *Portrayal of China and India on the American Screen*, pp.13-20. See also the complementary article by Dick Stromgren, “The Chinese Syndrome: The Evolving Image of Chinese and Chinese Americans in Hollywood Films”, in P. Loukides, ed., *Beyond the Stars: Stock Characters in American Popular Film* (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1990), pp.62-77.

### The Picturesque

The “picturesqueness” that could be attributed to traditional Chinese customs, language, clothing and scenery, was certainly a further key part of the appeal of China for novels, the stage and for the cinema screen. The main tool used was the flowery, literal “translation” of Chinese speech. Ernest Bramah’s “Kai Lung” novels, and those of Maurice De Kobra and Charles Pettit exploited exotic, and erotic, Chinese imagery and scenes. The Chinese setting sometimes appeared to be merely a suitably distanced and exotic setting for sexually suggestive writing bordering on “soft” pornography. Bramah especially, was extremely popular and his books remained in print throughout the 1920s and 1930s while new ones appeared.<sup>195</sup> Such operas as Puccini’s *Turandot* (1926), which had its first performance in London in 1927, and ballets such as Bartok’s *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1926) (which also owes something to Rohmeresque stereotypes) made a more violent use of this approach.<sup>196</sup>

When Somerset Maugham wanted to write a spectacle he did so with *East of Suez* (1922), which had an opening, dialogue-free, scene showing the hustle and bustle of a Beijing street.<sup>197</sup> The “picturesqueness” could be much hollower than this and grew out of a popular tradition that included Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Mikado* (1885) and Hall’s *The Geisha* (1896).<sup>198</sup> Oscar Asche’s *Chu Chin Chow* was a record-breaking musical in its time, and often identified as an early source of impressions of China by Britons (see below). First performed in 1916 and running a record 2,238 performances it was actually an Arabian Nights tale of robbers in Chinese disguises set in a mythical Baghdad.<sup>199</sup> Its success was heightened by two film adaptations. This genre was a perennial favourite.<sup>200</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Maurice Dekobra, *His Chinese Concubine* (London, 1935); Charles Pettit, *The Son of the Grand Eunuch* (London, 1927). For details of Bramah’s publications see the bibliography.

<sup>196</sup> The fact that both of these works appeared at the height of warlord-era violence in China can surely not be coincidental, Stanley Sacker, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music* (London, 1980), v.2, p.202, v.15, p.439.

<sup>197</sup> “East of Suez purports to be a play of spectacle. I had long wanted to try my hand at something of the sort and a visit to China presented me with an appropriate setting”, W. Somerset Maugham, *Collected Plays Volume III*, Preface, p.ix-x.

<sup>198</sup> Dance and Talbot’s *A Chinese Honeymoon*, was an similarly successful spectacle in 1901 and ran for 1075 nights after 1915 while another “Chinese” musical, *San Toy* ran for 768 performances after 1899, *Who’s Who in the Theatre*, pp.1530, 1537.

<sup>199</sup> *Who’s Who in the Theatre*, pp.1530. The title song had what passed for a cod-Eastern melody, servants kept their arms crossed and their hands in their sleeves, and a statue of a seated Buddha made an appearance in a “cactus grove” in act 1, the limit of Far-Eastern verisimilitude. *Chu Chin Chow: A Musical Tale of the East*, Oscar Asche, Music by Frederic Norton, [1916] (London, 1931). The musical inspired at least one author in his attempt at another typical caricature, the Chinese pirate, see H. Kingsley, *Kong* (London, 1927), dedication to Oscar Asche.

<sup>200</sup> The spectacle was praised, for example, in *Shanghai: Spectacular operette*, TMPF, Drury Lane, 28/8/18, W.C. Duncan and L. Wylie. Edgar Wallace’s *The Yellow Mask* (1928) involved “highly decorative and elaborate” scenes in the Empress Dowager Cixi’s court and in other Chinese palaces, TMPF, Carlton, 8/2/28, clippings, *The Sketch*, 29/2/28, pp.401-403. Asche failed to repeat his earlier success with a pirate musical, *Kong*, but which, “as spectacle... was brilliant from end to end”. Franz Lehar’s light opera *Land of Smiles*, which told of the dangers of marrying Chinese princes, was a hit in London in 1931 and *San Toy* was revived in 1932 although critics felt its chinoiserie was dated. TMPF, Cambridge, 5/2/31, *Kong: A New*

There were attempts to bring Chinese drama itself to the London stage, or drama with Chinese conventions at least; such plays included *The Yellow Jacket* (1922), *The Circle of Chalk* (1929 and 1931) and S.I. Hsiung's *Lady Precious Stream* (1934). Their successes were, in part, due to the scope for spectacle and the exotic involved in the stagings, costumes, customs and the stories.<sup>201</sup> Indeed, the fantasy writer Lord Dunsany wrote, in a preface to the published version of another of Hsiung's plays, that:

if China had not been there, this land of dragons, peach-trees, peonies, and plum blossoms, with its ages and ages of culture, slowly storing its dreams in green jade, is just the land that poets would have invented.<sup>202</sup>

### Children's Fiction

Boys' adventure fiction had its quota of bloodthirsty and unfavourable Chinese tales by G.A. Henty or F.S. Brereton.<sup>203</sup> Bessie Marchant's *Among Hostile Hordes* (1901) portrayed the Taiping rebellion as bloodily xenophobic, and eulogized Gordon's role in suppressing it and its cowardly Chinese soldiers. The Taiping Emperor was portrayed in a manner which suggested Rohmer's Fu Manchu and pointed to the pre-existence of a stereotype which Rohmer refined and publicised.<sup>204</sup> Most books for children about China or the Chinese were dominated by the influence of, or products of, the mission presses. The LMS published a monthly magazine for them, *News From Afar*.<sup>205</sup> In most books China was a quaint clichéd land of queues and pidgin English; Arthur Ransome demanded of the illustrator of his *Missee Lee* (1941): "trees and Chinks - and - donkeys - and chopsticks - and opium pipes - sampans - water keys - costumes - whatnot."<sup>206</sup> Some, books, however, were self-consciously explanatory and didactic, such as Burke's *Billy and Beryl in Chinatown* (1935) which countered the misconceptions he usually propagated.<sup>207</sup>

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*Chinese Drama*, Harold Kingsley, *Daily Telegraph* review, 6/5/31; TMPF, Drury Lane, 8/5/31, *Land of Smiles*, Franz Lehar; Daly's, 22/2/32, *San Toy*, *Observer* review, 28/2/32.

<sup>201</sup> TMPF, Kingsway, 7/3/22, *The Yellow Jacket: A Play in the Chinese Manner*, G.C. Hazelton and Benrimo; New, 14/2/39, *The Circle of Chalk*, Klabaud, English version by James Laver; Little, 17/12/34, *Lady Precious Stream*, S.I. Hsiung.

<sup>202</sup> S.I. Hsiung, *The Professor from Peking* (London, 1939), Preface, p.viii.

<sup>203</sup> G.A. Henty, *With the Allies to Peking* (London, 1900); F.S. Brereton, *The Dragon of Peking: A Tale of the Boxer Revolt* (London, 1902).

<sup>204</sup> Marchant, *Among Hostile Hordes*, pp.88. See also Herbert Strang's *The Air Scout* (London, 1912, 1918), in which the Chinese are also portrayed as cunning and indifferent to sentiment, pp.128-29.

<sup>205</sup> Throughout 1928 the leading story in this was "The Westons in China" by George Barnes. This story was set against the background of the SDF and China's newsworthiness and identified many popular perceptions of the Chinese, *News from Afar*, 1928, *passim*.

<sup>206</sup> John Bennet, *The Pigtail of Ah Lee Ben Loo* (London, 1928). A.W. Chrisman, *Shen of the Sea* (London, 1925), *The Wind that Wouldn't Blow: Stories of the Merry Middle-Kingdom for Children and Myself* (London, 1927); Ransome to Margaret Renold, quoted in Hugh Brogan, ed., *The Life of Arthur Ransome* (London, 1984), p.381.

<sup>207</sup> See also, for example, C.E. Roberts, *Vagabond Wong* (London, 1936).

Such fiction catered for what has been termed the “perennial fascination” of the Chinese for children. In one extreme case in 1929 a young shoplifter’s legal defence rested on his dual personality and “peculiarities” which began with “his liking for Chinese images” but which became an obsession with meeting real Chinese, mostly laundrymen.<sup>208</sup>

### Fictional Clichés

The essential ingredients of the majority of these widely available fictions were negative or sentimental images of the Chinese, both in China and in communities abroad, and of relations with them. The basic themes involved violence, Chinese cruelty, opium and a hostile approach to inter-racial sex and marriage which was usually accompanied by frequent sensationalist portrayal of it. Some of these texts were obviously pornographic in intent and this element was heightened by the inter-racial sexual taboo. Verisimilitude was also an important element and writers such as Simpson, Miln and Gilbert used it to push forward political viewpoints.

Most of these writers were concerned with writing saleable books and Chinese themes, or Chinese variations on well-known themes, were recognised sellers.<sup>209</sup> It has been argued that exaggerated representations of fictional villains are necessary and particularly that “racial symbolism” is “a means of intensifying and dramatizing conflicts” and should not be taken seriously as an expression of the author’s, or the reader’s, beliefs.<sup>210</sup> It is clear, however, that there was a strong continuity of attitudes between popular fiction and serious commentaries and, as the next chapter will show, between both types of work and the structures of treaty port life in China. In fact fiction provided a forum for the discussion of topics often unsuitable for “serious” commentaries, notably the issue of sex and the moral corruption of Britons in the tropics. In this sense fiction reinforced, explicitly, many of the taboos and injunctions implicit in the serious commentaries.<sup>211</sup>

The more extreme fictions were usually written by those with no direct experience of China, but so pervasive and successful was the genre that it influenced the writings of those with first-hand knowledge and literary ambition. The influence of the tone adopted

<sup>208</sup> Iona and Peter Opie, *The Singing Game* (Oxford, 1985), pp.465-67; *CET*, 28/2/29, p.142.

<sup>209</sup> The use of “local colour” by Rohmer, Burke and “Eastern” novelists’ was praised by the influential writing advisor Michael Joseph, “Short Story Writing for Profit”, *Complete Writing for Profit* (London, 1930), pp.192, 139. That part of the plot of Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* (London, 1868) which involved the attempts by the Indian priests to recover a stolen jewel, was frequently rewritten with Chinese settings, see for example, Sexton Blake Library, *The Tiger of Canton*, Fergus Hume, *The Golden Wang-Ho* (London, 1901, 1928 as *The Secret of the Chinese Jar*); *The Mandarin’s Fan* (London, 1904).

<sup>210</sup> J.G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago, 1976), pp.31-32.

<sup>211</sup> One uncompromisingly titled *roman à clef* dealt with the corruption and downfall of a young businessman in Hong Kong, John Lambourne, *Squeeze: A Tale of China* (London, 1935).

towards the Chinese, for example, by Wallace, Bok, Mills or Hill, and towards Eurasians by Miln and others, is underlined by the fact that for a work to be commercially successful as a literary product both the author and reader must share certain attitudes about the world, or in this case, about the Chinese.<sup>212</sup> In fact fictional clichés about the Chinese were widely understood and recognised, widely enough to encourage self-reference and the use of a limited number of stock characters.<sup>213</sup> The consistency of this narrow characterisation prompted Earl Derr Biggers to create Charley Chan in reaction to them, although this aphorism-quipping character is itself related to the stereotype used in the play *The Chinese Puzzle* and Ernest Bramah's Kai Lung novels.<sup>214</sup> Some of the most influential of these books were extensively circulated and reprinted.<sup>215</sup>

Not all fictions were negative of course. However, those that were not, such as Harold Acton's *Peonies and Ponies* (1941) and the novels of Keyte, Stewart and Sewell, were far outnumbered by those that were. Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* (1931) was internationally successful, but more Britons, ultimately, read "Sexton Blake".

The basic Yellow Peril structure of the Rohmer or Wallace novels, whether or not "incarnate in one man," was transparently fantastical yet was related to the racial theorising of Stoddard and others which influenced so many serious commentators; and it has been shown that Rohmer felt Fu Manchu would appeal because of the background of more seriously held political views and fears and current events.<sup>216</sup> These attitudes were also easily capable of being transposed from "Limehouse" fictions to Far Eastern non-fictional sketches.<sup>217</sup> Some writers used such backgrounds to deal specifically and

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<sup>212</sup> Ruth Miln Elson, *Myths and Mores in American Best-Sellers 1865-1965* (New York, 1985), p.6. Similarly Colin Holmes concluded that "hostile literary stereotypes of Jews [in British inter-war fiction] were unlikely to have been presented if readers were unable to identify with them", *Anti-Semitism in British Society*, p.219.

<sup>213</sup> The character of the Chinese bandit-general in *Shanghai Express* (1932), for instance, was less a political portrayal than a contemporary "Mr Wu", a sadist who attempts to extract a sexual price for freeing hostages, as was the Chinese villain in Conquest's *Forbidden*. Killam found a similar situation with regard to fiction on Africa, *Africa in English Fiction*, p.170-71.

<sup>214</sup> The first Charley Chan book was *The Chinese Parrot* (London, 1927); on Biggers see T.J. Binyon, "Murder Will Out": *The Detective in Fiction* (Oxford, 1989), pp.99-100 and Sandra M. Hawley, "The Importance of Being Charley Chan", Goldstein, et al., eds., *America Views China*, pp.132-47. See also Colin Watson on "The Orientation of Villainy", *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and their Audience* (London, 1971), pp.109-21.

<sup>215</sup> The Readers Library Publishing Company reprinted bestsellers and sold them in cheap editions in newsagents and department stores. In 1930 *Limehouse Nights*, Biggers' *The Chinese Parrot* and Conquest's *Forbidden* were all in print (see the publisher's list in *Forbidden*) and a novelisation of Arnold Bennet's film script *Piccadilly* was also published. The Novel Library published novelisations of Robert Simpson's *Welcome Danger!* and Karen Brown's *The Girl from China*. On the influence and reach of such publishers see Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, pp.14-18.

<sup>216</sup> On yellow peril fears in the English-speaking world see, for example, Ward, *White Canada Forever*, pp.118-41; Wu, *Yellow Peril*, pp.3, 30.

<sup>217</sup> See, for example, S.C. George's *Singapore Nights* (London, 1942) and *The Wiles of Lim Quong* (London, 1943).

didactically with military threats to the British Empire from China.<sup>218</sup> Furthermore one of the strengths of popular literature lies in its ability to confirm widely held attitudes whilst imaginatively flouting them, the most obvious case being the consistent denigration of sexual and marital relations between Britons and Chinese whilst sensationally representing them.<sup>219</sup>

Many treaty port fictions were also critical of the conciliatory policies of the foreign powers. Gilbert, Bland and Lenox Simpson used fiction to augment the attacks they made in their more serious works against those who were betraying the treaty ports (including the missionaries).<sup>220</sup> Bennett and Mills' fictional heroes wreaked imaginary revenge on Chinese nationalists and their alleged co-conspirators - Bolsheviks and Eurasians - while Graham and Hobart wrote elegiacally of the achievements of the treaty port communities. In the adventure novels Chinese master criminals, bandits, pirates and communists were always defeated. In reality, of course, Chinese nationalism had triumphed and the European powers had retreated.

### **The Influence of fiction**

#### **1 Protest and Censorship**

Although the number of novels with Chinese themes or settings was greater than has hitherto been thought there were few specific complaints about them, although there were generalised complaints. However, one contemporary critic charged Sax Rohmer with spreading "race-suspicion and contempt" and was equally critical of the sentimentality and lack of realism in Miln's "China".<sup>221</sup>

It is clear that while entertaining audiences who were quite able to suspend their disbelief for an evening<sup>222</sup> and informing Britons about the characteristics of the "Chinese", plays were frequently pointed to by Chinese observers as offensive. There were objections to such complaints. James Agate commented on *The Shanghai Gesture*

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<sup>218</sup> Herbert Strang's, *The Air Scout*, a boy's book, dealt with Chinese attempts to invade and colonize northern Australia; Vernon George's *The Crown of Asia* (London, 1939), warned against a Sino-Japanese invasion of India. One Rohmer copyist, Achmed Abdullah, placed a Fu Manchu figure ("a new Attila, a new Scourge of God; an Attila with all the science and efficiency of Europe - an Attila who will use gas-bombs and dynamite and poison") at the head of a Japanese-Chinese plot, *The Blue Eyed Manchu* (London, 1923), p.111. The author of *The Yellow Wave: A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia* (London 1895 and 1918), was Kenneth Maguire, a member of the Legislative Assembly in New South Wales.

<sup>219</sup> Cawelti, *Adventure*, pp., 35-36.

<sup>220</sup> "Always ready to trade the souls and bodies of all the white men in the East for the redemption of one yellow coolie" wrote Gilbert, *Indiscretions of Lin Mang*, p.31.

<sup>221</sup> Paul Linebarger, Jr., "Western Fiction About China: General Misconceptions and Misrepresentations", *The Chinese Nation*, 10/12/30, pp.602, 617.

<sup>222</sup> "It is funny how, in the theatre, we accept the most arrant piffle with patience and with pleasure, provided it is served up with a certain amount of defiance of all that is credible, possible, human, let alone logical.", Unsourced review, 22/6/27, TMPF, Comedy, 8/6/27, *The Silent House*, J.G. Brandon and G. Pickett.



wondering if the cages offended “Chinese susceptibility” at the presentation of a truth or if they themselves were a “libel”. He concluded that “no Englishman will hold that in China all the young women are caged birds.”<sup>223</sup>

There were Chinese protests against *Mr Wu* before it was performed because:

the plot is unchinese and we were afraid that this attempt to foist it upon the British public as a specimen of modern Chinese civilization might engender prejudices unfavourable to the Chinese in their midst.

Chinese students who were asked to assist the production refused when changes they asked for were rejected and attempts to have the Lord Chamberlain ban the play were rebuffed.<sup>224</sup> (In fact an earlier version of the play, in which Wu’s revenge was carried out, was vetoed by the censor).<sup>225</sup> Lang himself claimed that the First Secretary of the Legation advised the production on its Chinese aspects.<sup>226</sup>

In March 1928 the Chargé d’Affaires of the Chinese Legation in London complained about five plays which the Lord Chamberlain’s Office were asked to suppress.<sup>227</sup> The British would have been quite happy to comply if there were “objectionable political references” (in 1933 they abetted the withdrawal of one commentary from publication because of hostile references to Jiang Jieshi) but in such cultural matters there was nothing they were prepared to do.<sup>228</sup> Questions were asked in Parliament and the producer of *Hit the Deck!* took the opportunity to get some useful publicity.<sup>229</sup> The Lord Chamberlain’s response was in fact indicative of the nature of the problem, he felt:

bound to admit that, owing partly to the antiquity of Chinese civilization, the disparity of Chinese ways and customs as compared with Western Europe, the picturesqueness of costume and ceremony inseparable from the Chinese Nation, there has always been an inclination on the part of

<sup>223</sup> TMPF, Scala, *The Shanghai Gesture*, J. Colton, 13/5/29, Review, n.d., James Agate. See also the *China Critic*, 6/3/30 p.218.

<sup>224</sup> M.C.T.Z. Tyau, *London Through Chinese Eyes or My Seven and a half years in London* (London, 1920), pp.293-97; W. Langley [FO] to The Comptroller, Lord Chamberlain’s Department, 25/11/13 (enclosing, The Chinese Minister to Sir Edward Grey, 21/11/13 and Y.T. Tang and W.L. New to the Chinese Minister, 20/11/13) and D. Dawson to Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 27/11/13, BL Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence, 1913/2028.

<sup>225</sup> “The drama remains painful, but ceases to be revolting; while there is now nothing necessarily hurtful to Chinese susceptibilities in either action or dialogue,” Report by Ernest A. Bendall, 22/10/13, BL LC Play Scripts, 1913/2028.

<sup>226</sup> Considering that the Chinese characters that decorated Wu’s walls were upside-down there seem to be grounds to doubt Lang’s claim, Lang, *Mr Wu*, pp.114-15; an Englishman was credited in the programme; TMPF, Strand, 27/11/13, New 15/4/22, *The Play Pictorial*, 23, No.140, p.96.

<sup>227</sup> The Plays were *The Silent House*, *The Yellow Mask*, *Listeners*, *Hit The Deck!* and *Tin Gods*, W.C. Chen to A. Chamberlain 7/3/28, FO 371/13225 F1190/F1190/10.

<sup>228</sup> The book was Mrs C.K. Chesterton’s *Young China and New Japan* (London, 1933). For details of the case see the file in P2394/2394/150 FO 395/502, and the summary in the *Foreign Office Index*, 1934.

<sup>229</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 19/3/28, in FO 371/13225 F1341/F1190/10.

dramatists in this country to draw upon China and its people for their themes, characters and the settings in their plays.<sup>230</sup>

The problem was left unresolved. While the Lord Chamberlain's Department felt that the plays merely exhibited the "picturesque", the plays themselves were strident in their use of established Rohmer-ish and other stereotypes.<sup>231</sup> Most of them began their runs in late 1927 or early 1928, a timing which suggests, especially given the origins of Wallace's show, a commercial response to the newsworthiness of China and which was hinted at by the Chinese Legation's complaint about "an increasing tendency."

These were not isolated cases of protest. In fact after 1928 they became more frequent as the diplomatic relationship between Britain and China changed and an increasing tendency to accept the need for sensitivity in such matters gained ground.<sup>232</sup> Chinese commentators continued to complain about such dramatic and fictional representations in general and against particular productions, especially in the treaty ports.<sup>233</sup>

More attention was paid to cinema. Many "Chinese" films drew protests of one sort or another. Lao She made a protest, from Chinese resident in London, against a film set in a criminal and opium-filled Limehouse, a key part of the plot of his novel *Er Ma* (1931).<sup>234</sup> Douglas Fairbank's *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), in which the "Mongol monarch is cold, complacent and sinister",<sup>235</sup> caused such complaints about the treatment of Asians that Fairbanks was assigned a police bodyguard when he visited Shanghai in 1929.<sup>236</sup> Other films caused protests in Shanghai.<sup>237</sup> The Chinese Legation in the United

<sup>230</sup> Major C.L. Gordon to Undersecretary of State, 19/3/28, FO 371/13225 F1341/F1190/10.

<sup>231</sup> A Chinese doctor and others plotted to poison the world in *Listeners*; "Murders, gaggings, torture, and the philosophy of ancestor worship", "gliding Chinamen; hidden treasures; a kidnapped girl (half-demented)," and "a pagoda [sic. actually a statue of a Buddha] coming to life" characterised the activities of a "creepy-crawly Chinaman" with a white female ward in *The Silent House* (which was later filmed); *Tin Gods* involved a pirate chief with "a grudge against our Empire" and a fondness for flaying people alive; TMPF, Wyndhams, 9/2/28 *Listeners*, R. Berkeley; TMPF, Comedy, 8/6/27, *The Silent House*, various reviews, n.d.; TMPF, Garrick, 1/2/28, *Tin Gods: A Play in 4 Acts*, E.C. Middleton, review, n.d..

<sup>232</sup> Sapper's *The Way Out* drew protests from the *Daily Mail* in 1930, *NCDN*, 27/2/30 p.7, "The Far East Seen from London". In William Sewell's unpublished novel "Shades" (1929) the offence taken by the Chinese characters at a play entitled "The Chink through the Wall" enlightens the British narrator to the depth of Chinese feelings, SOAS PPMS 16/19, pp.19-22. Sewell publicised this point more widely in his talks and lectures around the country see, for example the clipping from *The Northern Echo*, 26/1/31 in Sewell papers PPMS 16/37 "Engagement Diary".

<sup>233</sup> See, for example, "China Tea: A Farce in One Act", J. Huang, p.74, *The People's Tribune*, (NS) 1, No.3, 2/1/32. In Shanghai in 1928 there were protests from Chinese in the English language press and from Chinese journalists against an American production of *Captain Applejack* which included a Chinese pirate character. An amateur production of Maugham's *The Letter* was bowdlerised to prevent the Chinese characters in the play offending Chinese members of the audience; *NCH*, 10/3/28 pp.383, 394-95; *CE*, 15/9/28, pp.364-65.

<sup>234</sup> Lao She, *The Two Mas*, trs. K.K. Huang and D. Finkelstein (Hong Kong, 1984), pp.299-303. This may have been an indirect reference to the Legation's attack on the plays.

<sup>235</sup> *NCDN*, 2/3/25, p.18.

<sup>236</sup> *NCDN*, 10/12/29, p.12.

<sup>237</sup> Harold Lloyd's 1930 *Welcome Danger!*, in which he "Delve[d] into Tongland for his Thrills", drew a protest from Shanghai audiences as did *Shanghai Express*, *NCDN*, 21/2/30 p.30; 24/2/31, p.13, 28/2/30, pp.4, 6. On *Shanghai Express* see Pan Ling, *In Search of Old Shanghai* (Hong Kong, 1982), p.131; the film

States complained about *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932) while in 1931 Chinese students in England complained to the Chinese Consul-General about the film version of Wallace's *The Yellow Mask*.<sup>238</sup>

Films of the 1930s which were actually set in China drew protests because they concentrated on aspects of contemporary China that the National Government did not wish to see emphasized, such as warlordism in *Shanghai Express* (1932), or rural poverty in *The Good Earth* (1937). The National Government used its consuls abroad to protest against the distribution of offensive films, while the Chinese Consul-General in Los Angeles attempted to intervene before films were shot.<sup>239</sup> A combination of censorship,<sup>240</sup> fear of losing markets (Mexico and France had both embargoed American films in the 1920s),<sup>241</sup> and Government offers of help in film-production in return for vetoes over content were the main factors in this shift; several "warlord" films, for instance, were shelved after a Producer's Association investigation of the subject in 1937.<sup>242</sup>

## The Influence of Fiction

### 2 Ordinary Authorities: Britons in China

In tandem with these public and official concerns about fictional portrayals of the Chinese it is clear that individual behaviour and attitudes were also influenced. The successful establishment of the mythical Limehouse in the popular mind caused its creators some problems: "The superficial visitor goes away convinced that the romance of the Asiatic quarter has no existence outside the imaginations of writers of fiction" wrote Rohmer in 1922 and Burke's editor made a similar admission in 1927.<sup>243</sup> Newspaper writers seem to have found the area a disappointment by the end of the 1920s but this did not prevent a steady stream of articles dealing with such topics, even the

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was actually banned by both foreign and Chinese censors, *People's Tribune*, (NS) 5, 8/9/33, pp.114-16. Violent protests from audience members were quite fashionable in Shanghai at this time, French soldiers interrupted performances of *Beau Geste* (NCDN, 22/2/28 p.11) and Italian patriots performances of *Street Angel*, (NCDN, 10/1/29 p.13). See E.S. Cunningham, "Foreign Comment on American Picture Films" NARA Shanghai Post Files 1928 840.6(a).

<sup>238</sup> Briney, *Master of Villainy*, pp.214-15; NCDN, 6/6/31 p.31.

<sup>239</sup> Jones, *Portrayal*, pp.38-39.

<sup>240</sup> See J.E. Harley, *World-Wide Influences of the Cinema: A Study of Official Censorship and the International Cultural Aspects of Motion Pictures* (Los Angeles, 1940), for a list of films banned in China, which is dominated by those set in China itself, pp.110-14.

<sup>241</sup> Jones, *Portrayal*, p.4.

<sup>242</sup> Jones, *Portrayal*, p.39. Advances in sound technology also began to make "strategic export cuts" more difficult, *ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>243</sup> Rohmer, *Tales of Chinatown*, p.13; Burke, *Twinkletoes*, Editor's Note. Burke partly retracted some of his creation in *Abduction: A Story of Limehouse* (London, 1939) in which the abductors were white, a Chinese character spoke fluent English and tourists who had flocked to the area since "that awful book was published" were mocked, pp.48-49.

*Times* was apt to report Opium “den” raids in Limehouse.<sup>244</sup> The area, its inhabitants and their contrived reputation worked their way into London guide books.<sup>245</sup> The Chinese community in Britain was too small to have any tangible “representative” effect itself on British attitudes to China, what influence it had was actually the work of hack journalism and hack fiction.

Britons who went to China were usually ignorant of Chinese realities before they went. This was despite the fact that many people in all walks of life not related to China would have some acquaintance with visitors to the country or residents there; many local churches or other small groups, for example, supported particular missions.<sup>246</sup> Certainly many of them were equally as ignorant of China as of many other places and topics; the deficiencies of British education were frequently commented on.<sup>247</sup> Sir John Pratt was correct to write in 1943 that:

even today the number of Englishmen who make any attempt to cross over to the Chinese side of the gulf remains infinitesimal... the explanation is not to be found in any facile criticism of the treaty-port mind for, though these communities may not be a fair cross section of the social structure in Great Britain, their attitude is in fact a reflection of the indifference to things Chinese that exists in this country.<sup>248</sup>

This ignorance was by no means new or exceptional. The efforts of the Imperial Institute to educate the British about their Empire were never very successful,<sup>249</sup> although the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley provided at least one resident with their earliest memories of “China”.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> “London’s China Town Unromantic - Fireworks Banned on New Year - Vanished Limehouse Nights”, *NCH*, 7/4/28, p.35; “China Town in London on the Wane”, *ibid.*, 16/3/29, p.467. The *Celestial Empire* made a habit of repeating sensationalist stories from the London *Sunday Chronicle*, see for example, “White Queen of Chinatown: Woman’s Hatred of her Own Race”, 10/11/28, p.210; “Opium Smuggler’s Confession”, 17/5/29, p.274; “The Master-Mind Cannot Be Arrested”, 20/7/29, p.121. “The Chinese in this country are getting into trouble all over the place in regard to opium smoking. There have been large scale prosecutions in London and now six men have been prosecuted at Liverpool.” *NCDN*, 18/1/30, p.7, “The Far East Seen From London: Agitation against Foreign Seamen”.

<sup>245</sup> See, for example, E. Ford, ed., *Black’s Guide to London* (London, 1926), p.112, where Limehouse has “a somewhat unsavoury reputation” and Arthur Milton, *London in Seven Days: A Guide for People in a Hurry* (London, 1922), pp.64-65, where that reputation is debunked.

<sup>246</sup> Two brothers of Edith Thompson, a London milliner hanged for murder in 1923, as well as her lover, were seamen who visited the Far East. Other sailor acquaintances were also regular visitors and brought back gifts and stories from China, René Weis, *Criminal Justice: The True Story of Edith Thompson* (Harmondsworth, 1990), p.92.

<sup>247</sup> Swire Archives, Swire Oral Transcripts (hereafter ST) - 2, p.1; Tinkler Papers, Letter to Edith, 11/3/25; W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 25/3/27, FSC Ch/5/4; This was also one of Lao She’s explanations of British contempt in his novel *The Two Mas* [*Er Ma*], p.112.

<sup>248</sup> Sir John T. Pratt, *War and Politics in China* (London, 1943), pp.19-20.

<sup>249</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp.122-43.

<sup>250</sup> ST - 5, p.2; on the exhibition see Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp.107-12.

Blank ignorance, *Chu Chin Chow*,<sup>251</sup> literature, and missionaries appear to have represented the sum possibilities of remembered fore-knowledge.<sup>252</sup> There were romantic or exotic notions too, inspired especially by the clichés of children's and picturesque literature - of pagodas, queues and topsy-turveydom - and by nautical tales, "visions of lofty, sparred tea clippers, sinister water-front dens, and bronzed, tattooed seamen of all nations," or combinations of the two.<sup>253</sup> When H.C. Simms saw his first pagodas from the Yangzi he wrote that, "it was the first bit of the real China I had seen."<sup>254</sup> When E.H. Scott of the EPM in Shantou saw Quanzhou's "'boat-shaped" roofs" and "city walls with their Pagoda-flanked gateways" he declared he was "for the first time... visiting a typical town of real China."<sup>255</sup> For these men the perceived reality of China was strongly rooted in fictional representations and clichés.

Fictional works were frequently recommended as sources of information about China's past and present.<sup>256</sup> The *China Christian Year Book* regularly included fictional works in reviews of literature on China in English. Those going to China often read novels in preparation, or were recommended to. Richard Dobson of BAT prepared himself for business life in China by reading Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* and Alice T. Hobart's *Oil for the Lamps of China*.<sup>257</sup> In this way many of the novels fulfilled the didactic function their authors intended.<sup>258</sup>

Fiction was drawn upon, consciously or otherwise, by Britons in China when articulating their experiences. A ship's pilot had "a large moustache... just like Fu

<sup>251</sup> ST - 15, pt.1, p.3; Moneypenny, "Ningbo More Far", Unpublished Memoirs (1947), IWM, p.1. "Willow pattern and Chu chin chow" was the sum of Thomas Woodroffe's knowledge in his semi-autobiographical fiction *River of Golden Sand* (London, 1936), p.13.

<sup>252</sup> "My mother brought me up on Missionary Stories" remembered the Rev. Lyall [CIM], BBC Tape roll 11, p.1. Harold Isaacs found a similar situation in the United States, *Scratches*, pp.127-32. After 1931, of course, there was Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*. Baptist Carrier Prentice had read so much that she felt on arrival that "I belong here already", Prentice to M.E. Bowser, 22/1/31, BMSA Ch/64; Baptist Hilda Stacey's reading had not warned her about "how very Chinese [Shanghai] is", but most Western books on Shanghai would not do so, circular letter, 19/1/27, BMSA, CH/75.

<sup>253</sup> "A.H.W.", "Shanghai", *The Pipeline*, 1/7/28, p.213; "Romantic visions of San Francisco waterfronts, sailors lashed to the masts of sailing vessels - ... and generally a mysterious land full of pig-tails and inscrutable faces", Moneypenny Papers, "Ningpo", p.1.

<sup>254</sup> H.C. Simms Papers, IWM, Journal, 15/5/25. Carl Crow recommended that "The visitor [to Shanghai] who cannot visit any other city in China should see the Loonghwa Pagoda", *Handbook for China (Including Hong Kong)*, (4th edition, Shanghai, 1926), p.149.

<sup>255</sup> E.H. Scott, "A Visit to Amoy and Chuanchow 7th to 16th April 1931", 19/4/31, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 43b.

<sup>256</sup> J.W. Bennett's *Manchu Cloud* gave the reader "a workable general notion of what the trouble is about", *CET*, 12/1/28, p.26. Bland's *Something Lighter*, and Buck's *The Good Earth* were recommended in the bibliography of the Department of Overseas Trade's *Notes on Some Aspects of Life in China*. Barnes recommended J.L. Stewart's *The Laughing Buddha* (London, 1926) and Keyte's *Daughter of Cathay* and *Minsan (Enter China)*, p.164).

<sup>257</sup> *CCYB* 1928, pp.380-81; *CCYB* 1929, pp.546-48; *CCYB* 1931, pp.421-23; Richard Dobson, *China Cycle* (London, 1946), p.7.

<sup>258</sup> Although a 1926 survey found 60% of a sample of mainly American missionaries had read less than three books on China before arrival, and 20% had read none, P.J. Mclean, "The Junior Missionary's Mind", *CR*, August 1926, pp.573-75.

Manchu.” R.V.C. Bodley described meeting in China a Daoist priest with “a moustache suggestive of Chu Chin Chow.”<sup>259</sup> In 1924 Charles Drage recorded visiting a temple in China, viewing a Buddha and imagining Human sacrifice - a view of that religion incompatible with its usual practices but quite in line with the caricatured atmosphere of cruelty to be found in Rohmer or Sexton Blake.<sup>260</sup> A *Daily Express* correspondent in 1928 wrote on Shanghai with “hazy ideas of Sax Rohmer’s Chinese underworld and opium den life flitting through” his mind.<sup>261</sup> Malcom Lowry used to boast imaginatively about being wounded by cross fire in an underworld gun-battle in Shanghai in 1927.<sup>262</sup> Nineteen year old Shanghai-born John Thorburn had various schemes of adventure, including fighting pirates with a “Q” ship at Bias Bay and joining the Chinese army to fight communists and bandits. He left home in May 1931 in an attempt at “adventuring” in which he took his service pistol, ammunition, SVC uniform trousers and a mind apparently too well-fed on adventure fiction. Unfortunately for him, and unlike the fictional white adventurers of the thrillers, Thorburn was mortal.<sup>263</sup> “Everyone has heard of the Chinaman’s cunning, silence and inscrutability,” mused ex-SMP Sergeant E.W. Peters, “After spending several years in close contact with them, these three brief words seem to me to describe them better than any others”. Peter’s repertoire of ignorant clichés prevented empathy and possibly helped create the attitudes which led to his arrest and trial for the gratuitous murder of a Chinese beggar.<sup>264</sup> The connection between the Chinese and poisons - pervasive in fiction - surfaced in reality.<sup>265</sup> The wife of a returning trooper of the Shanghai Defence Force claimed he had brought back poison and tried to administer it to her. A medical orderly in Weihaiwei feared for his life. H.B. Morse’s wife hated the Chinese and told J.K. Fairbank that they would poison him.<sup>266</sup>

Theatrical Chinese villains were popular with their audiences and with amateur performers. The amateur dramatic society at the Headquarters of the APC in London produced two such plays in 5 years, possibly watched, or acted in, by staff members

<sup>259</sup> ST - 21, p.41; R.V.C. Bodley, *Indiscreet Travels East* (London, 1934), p.187.

<sup>260</sup> Drage papers, Diary, 20/5/24. This response is strikingly reminiscent of a key element in the plot of the Sexton Blake thriller *The Yellow Tiger*!

<sup>261</sup> “Notorious City of the Far East”, it was reprinted in China under the heading “As others see us: Typical Misdescription of Shanghai”, *NCH*, 14/7/28, p.82.

<sup>262</sup> Day, *Malcom Lowry*, p.91. Lowry’s attitude towards the Chinese on this trip was apparently infused with the belligerence of 1927, see the song he allegedly composed in Gordon Bowker, *Malcom Lowry Remembered* (London, 1985), pp.33-34.

<sup>263</sup> There was no clear news about his whereabouts for several months. In fact, Thorburn was almost immediately arrested by the Chinese military after fatally wounding two railway policemen as he walked along the Nanjing-Shanghai line in the dead of night. He was killed while in military custody. His disappearance caused a serious diplomatic incident and enraged treaty port opinion, *CYB* 1931-32, pp.268-72; Peking No.830, 12/6/31 and encs., FO 371/15509 F3677/3361/10.

<sup>264</sup> Peters, *Shanghai Policeman*, p.34.

<sup>265</sup> “There are poisons in the East which no Occidental mind can conceive, which no Occidental pen has the macabre power to describe”, Karen Brown, *The Girl from China* (London, 1930), p.243.

<sup>266</sup> *CET*, 25/10/28; F.W. Bunter papers, Memoir, p.11, IWM No.87/22/1; J.K. Fairbank, *Chinabound: A Fifty Year Memoir* (New York, 1982), p.21.

bound for China in the future. The “characteristics” displayed were widely recognised as well, an actor in *Mr Wu* being congratulated for a “fine character study, perfect in every detail, of the suave, impassive Chinese magnate” whose “assumption of a Chinese accent (not that we have any pretensions to expert knowledge of the subject)” was “exceedingly well done.”<sup>267</sup> In an earlier production of *The Chinese Puzzle* the leading actor “had no difficulty in creating the requisite Oriental atmosphere and fired off his inexhaustible supply of aphorisms with perfect aplomb.”<sup>268</sup>

Specific complaints about the technical ignorance of the realities of Chinese life and society were misplaced then. Popular knowledge of China and the Chinese was widely propagated in the press, in treaty port commentaries and in fiction. Not only were constructs of Chinese “characteristics” transmitted but so were assumptions about the nature of relations between Britons and Chinese.

### Ordinary Authorities

I am... quite used to the pink exhausted expression on Shaema’s face when a bankclerk from Clapham, a soapmaker from Lancashire, a painter or poet from Bloomsbury begins telling him all about the situation in China.<sup>269</sup>

wrote Stella Benson in 1929 about her husband, an official in the Chinese Maritime Customs. Benson’s comment touches on a usually ignored aspect of Sino-British relations, the fact that every one was an expert and was required to be through the process of socialisation. “There is never any lack of things to say” wrote W.G. Sewell.<sup>270</sup> Surviving correspondence from China is astonishingly didactic and many of the potted histories and explanations similarly so, and derived directly or indirectly from the experts, from Gilbert and from the *North China Daily News*. The profusion of China memoirs is also related to this.

A hierarchy of age and wealth characterised the British communities in China, experience of which, recounted verbally or in the books of the China experts, was perceived as the sole source of creditable knowledge about the Chinese.<sup>271</sup> Socialisation in the treaty ports required those already socialised to pass on the values acquired, which were often legitimised and bolstered in print, and so the myth of the “China Hand” had been born. The compliments paid to the professional commentators were also used of ordinary residents. A consul was praised because he “talks Chinese, knows the workings

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<sup>267</sup> *The Pipeline*, 9, 27/11/29, p.380.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 30/1/24, p.32.

<sup>269</sup> Benson Diaries, 17/12/29.

<sup>270</sup> Sewell, journal letter, 9/9/28, Sewell Papers, SOAS PPMS 16/3.

<sup>271</sup> Lenox Fane, *Legation Street*, p.310.

of the Chinese mind probably as well as any European, suffers under no delusions, and has preserved his sense of proportion.”<sup>272</sup>

It is clear that many ideas were transmitted in the expatriate communities from mouth to mouth in the context of the structures of sociability such as the dinner party and the club. Talking “shop” excessively was perhaps natural in a community so replete with “experts.”<sup>273</sup> One impressionable naval officer imbibed several new theories at dinner parties up and down the Yangzi: that the Chinese having tasted superiority over the Germans and White Russians were now eager vengefully to exert themselves over other Europeans and Americans; the Chinese were decadent as a race; they needed putting in their place at the point of a bayonet once a decade, and so on. His informants were books, Consuls, Customs officials and businessmen.<sup>274</sup> Consul Blunt in Yichang told W.F. Scott that “if one could make the Chinese laugh we need never be afraid and as they were just like children this was quite easy.”<sup>275</sup> Captain Bazalgette, talked with men with “twenty years experience” in China and described Chinese life as “backwards about”, as did APC salesman, J. Philips.<sup>276</sup> Stella Benson came to feel that the Chinese were ugly, dirty, politically and morally complacent, and their country dishonest and “retrogressing.”<sup>277</sup> By 1930 she had become openly dismissive of Chinese civilization: “I find nothing in my experience... to suggest that any utterance of any Chinese, past or present, would have seemed to us worth listening to, if it had been uttered by a Nordic.”<sup>278</sup>

Non-fictional attitudes, and the vocabulary of “characteristics”, were also widely disseminated in company journals, guide books and handbooks.<sup>279</sup> The War Office’s pamphlet about Shanghai, for example, recommended Gilbert’s *What’s Wrong with China*, d’Auxion de Ruffé’s *Is China Mad?* and, for history, Bland and Backhouse’s *China Under the Empress Dowager*, (which was still a popular seller in 1925).<sup>280</sup> In an appendix entitled “Some Chinese Characteristics” it was announced that the Chinese mind was passive, the Chinese ignorant and gullible, selfishly individualist and “out of step with the world.”<sup>281</sup> The Foreign Office had worried that the 20,000 British troops of the Shanghai Defence Force were criticising the treaty port British in letters home but a reading of surviving papers of a score of military men does not bear this fear out; their

<sup>272</sup> Hamilton papers, Letter to Freddy, 13/6/27.

<sup>273</sup> Lampson to Walford Selby, 15/11/28, FO 800/263; Rupert Hart-Davis, ed., *The Autobiography of Arthur Ransome* (London, 1976), p.325.

<sup>274</sup> Hamilton papers, Journal, 28/1/28; 11/5/27; 27/5/27.

<sup>275</sup> Scott papers, Letter to Sisters, 23/10/26.

<sup>276</sup> Bazalgette papers, letters to parents, 11/5/27, 2/5/27; “It is just inversion... they just seem to see everything upside down”, J.M. Philips papers, letter to P.S. Jones, 15/12/24.

<sup>277</sup> Benson Diaries, 22/11/29; 14/12/29; 10/4/30; 19/12/29.

<sup>278</sup> Benson to Stephen Hudson, 14/4/30, Schiff papers, BL Add. Mss. Add 52916.

<sup>279</sup> See, for example, “Experiences of an Exile”, *The Pipeline*, 4, 10/9/24, pp.234-35.

<sup>280</sup> CR, May 1925, p.302.

<sup>281</sup> War Office, *Notes on Shanghai* (London, 1928).



views were largely conservative, often bellicose, and replete with the characterisations later to be found in the War Office's pamphlet.<sup>282</sup>

Analyses of Chinese character were as symptomatic as they were formative. The market for them already existed but characteristics "observed" tended to be self-fulfillingly prophetic; people saw in the Chinese what they expected to see. They used the vocabulary supplied to articulate their own feelings and impressions and so consciously or unconsciously accepted and reinforced the validity of the notions outlined. The discourse of Chinese characteristics offered a dismissive and distancing vocabulary for articulating experience: "Often I feel that one experiences in China the things that one only reads of in novels at home" remarked one quaker missionary. For William Sewell life in China often revealed "that side of the Chinese character which is so grossly exaggerated in the cinema and in the cheap magazines at home."<sup>283</sup> Memoirs written by residents of China refer often enough to such comments to show how accepted notions were internalised, and how clichéd a vocabulary it was.<sup>284</sup> What was more important was the pervasiveness and ordinariness of the discourse of characteristics in British print and related cultures. Richard Wilhelm wrote of the revelatory nature of his insight that the abstract term "coolie" had prevented him from seeing Chinese labourers as human beings with human relationships.<sup>285</sup> Stella Benson wrote of one of her acquaintances in England that she "had donned an armour of false facts about everything" to do with China, a metaphor which suggests both aggression and self-protection.<sup>286</sup> Some fiction, such as Pearl Buck's, could also enable people understand, empathise and articulate; for Miles Lampson seeing the summer flooding of 1931 from the air "Reminded one forcibly of the opening passages of Mrs Buck's 'Good Earth'."<sup>287</sup>

The influence of this dominant discourse can also be seen in the way those treaty port residents who were initially sympathetic to Chinese political aspirations or to the Chinese themselves grew disillusioned and adopted the clichés and virulence of the experts.<sup>288</sup> There was, then, a tangible continuity in the discourse presented by the China

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<sup>282</sup> Lampson to Barton, S/O, 29/1/28, FO 228/3779/15 15e. Most SDF soldiers did not appear to question British policy whilst those that did considered it far too lenient and appeared to want a full scale war. Some with doubts about the situation in China found that the turn of events combined with life in the treaty port atmosphere caused them to change their minds; see, for example, W. Agnew, Letter to Mother, 3/4/27, IWM Agnew papers.

<sup>283</sup> Rose Tebbutt to Bertha Bracey, 13/9/31, FSC CH/6; W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 4/12/26, FSC CH/5/4.

<sup>284</sup> See, for example, A.H. Rasmussen, *China Trader* (London, 1954), Preface, p.viii.

<sup>285</sup> Richard Wilhelm, *The Soul of China* (London, 1928), pp.22-24.

<sup>286</sup> Benson Diaries, 5/4/29.

<sup>287</sup> Lampson Diaries, 28/7/31.

<sup>288</sup> Bazalgette papers, letter to parents, 11/5/27; "I came out here thinking that the Chinaman was merely fighting for his rights like any other trade unionist, but not more than 1/2% understand what a trade union is, let alone have any idea what their rights are. The 99% are exactly the same as they were 2000 years ago. The only thing they understand is force...", Agnew papers, Letter to Mother, 3/4/27. Benson initially loved the Chinese "very much. I have never felt so much drawn to a race or been so rarely disappointed in the details of human intercourse with a people", Benson to Doris Estcourt 2/5/20, BL Add. Mss. Add 59659,

commentators and that of the treaty port communities. The “China Hands” knew their market well. The effect on individual behaviour of lessons rammed home daily in the pages of the *North China Daily News* was marked. In 1930, for example, Stella Benson’s husband told a Chinese guest:

that he had been 16 years in China, and had never found or met a Chinese whose psychology seemed to him more mysterious than his psychology seemed to every Chinese. Europeans studied and understood China much better than Chinese understood Europe - Austen Chamberlain’s lightest note to the Chinese Government showed more brains, subtlety and understanding than China’s most portentous national pronouncement.<sup>289</sup>

### Conclusion

The pervasiveness of “knowledge” about China and the Chinese, the facility with which knowledge was acquired and disseminated, and the static nature of the stereotypes involved in all media served to provide a basis for, or to reinforce, the foreign sense of superiority and domination. Sir Frederick Maze was fond of repeating the claim that Sir Robert Hart’s success in taking over and running the Maritime Customs was due to his “unparalleled knowledge of Chinese psychology,”<sup>290</sup> the point being that Maze believed this to be true, and also seemed to take the fact as an analogy for his own success in taking control of the Customs in 1929. Diplomatic, military, economic or political considerations were seen to be of secondary importance. Such an approach generally distanced the handlers from any responsibility to adapt themselves to change or to accept the validity and integrity of Chinese politics and society. “Expecting the unexpected” was a common Legation cliché, intimately linked with the “topsy-turveydom” peddled by the China experts.<sup>291</sup>

The community of informers of British public opinion was, then, one with largely first-hand information about the country through residence there. It was certainly interested, in the Saidian sense, in “dealing” with China in various degrees: “by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it.”<sup>292</sup> The discourse of knowledge it articulated was rigid in its structural implications, that the Chinese needed to be controlled and dominated as if they were a subject nation. This discourse argued in favour of the treaty port *status quo* of the pre-Nationalist years. Furthermore by denigrating the Chinese and contacts with them,

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693d, Unbound Letters of Stella Benson; Bailie-Grohman papers, GRO/7, Bailie-Grohman to Fitzherbert, 24/6/34.

<sup>289</sup> Benson Diaries, 10/4/30

<sup>290</sup> See his comments on a letter received from L.A. Lyall, 28/5/27, Maze papers, Confidential Letters, Vol. 2, and Maze to Charles Addis, 22/2/29, Confidential Letters Vol. 3.

<sup>291</sup> See, for example, Lampson’s minute on the expected fall of the Nationalist regime in 1930, to FO No.343, 18/6/30, FO 228/4119/244 2.

<sup>292</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p.3.

especially sexual ones, it had a communally protective function. As in the case of India it inculcated or reinforced the behavioural taboos of the British communities.<sup>293</sup> The public discourse of the China experts was in this way at loggerheads with the stated policy of the British Government and the activities of the British Legation.

The experts had reputations to create and jobs to do, to justify, and protect. The protection was as much on an individual as a communal scale. "He talks and writes merely to keep his precious job", wrote Maze of E.M. Gull.<sup>294</sup> Bland, Woodhead, Gilbert *et al* all had precious jobs to protect, which explains the especial virulence they reserved for the largely better-educated returned students who challenged their interpretations and competed for their interpretative roles; more especially so as the quality of their work was often questioned.<sup>295</sup> These experts also saw the value of controversy as much as Sax Rohmer saw the value in a Chinese villain or M.P. Shiel saw the value in reissuing his yellow peril books in times of political crisis.

Although not always explicitly used in written analyses or commentary it is clear that the "characteristics" involved in the denigration of the Chinese were commonly assumed to be understood and recognised by readers. Chinese themes were common and the stereotypes instantly recognisable across different media. Metropolitan fictional stereotypes were used both to articulate experience in China, and as guides to British and Chinese behaviour there, and the negative influence of film and stage characterisations itself became a cliché.<sup>296</sup> This discourse, then, involved both metropolitan popular culture and the analyses of most of the China experts in a continuum of information and advice.

British literature on, or dealing with the Chinese ultimately taught one major lesson, that of the necessary social isolation of the British in China from the Chinese as a result of the superior status of the British; it taught this explicitly, by warning against fraternisation between the groups, and implicitly, by calling for fraternisation and recognising that this was not the status quo. The language used was familiar and similar to that used about other British-dominated nations and peoples and by other colonial rulers.<sup>297</sup> The discourse of the China experts was functional and usually based on a

<sup>293</sup> For the emphasis on sexual and social isolation from Indians in Anglo-Indian fiction see Moore-Gilbert, *Kipling and "Orientalism"*, pp.51-56.

<sup>294</sup> Maze to W.F. Tyler, 10/7/29, Maze papers, Confidential Letters, Vol. 3. B.L. Simpson's correspondence with his publisher about his early political commentaries on the Russo-Japanese War is instructive, BL Macmillan Archive, *passim*.

<sup>295</sup> The Legation's Chinese Secretary observed in 1929 that "mere stupidity" was "the cause of most of our trouble with the British press in China and Hong Kong, which is naturally run by third rate men - otherwise they would not be doing that sort of work," Teichman minute on Canton No.178, 30/11/29, FO 228/3987/2 22g1.

<sup>296</sup> Christian administrator Harold Hodgkin told of the son of a friend who once: "answered that he knew all about Chinamen; they were cruel, wicked people; he had seen lots of them at the pictures", Hodgkin, *China in the Family of Nations*, pp.244-45; A.G.N. Ogden, draft notes, para.18, "Chinese Characteristics", BT 60/31/5 70a; Bridge, *Peking Picnic*, p.101.

<sup>297</sup> Kiernan, *Lords of Human Kind*, *passim*.; L.P. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, Connecticut), 1968.

*posteriori* reasoning. It articulated and confirmed degrees of difference and domination. It suggested principles of behaviour: firmness, condescension and the needs for supervision, maintaining one's own aloofness and untainted correctness; in short the need for distance. These principles both rationalised and informed the social structure of, and socialisation in, the British communities; the armoury of attitudes and characterisations was an integral part of that socialisation in both a causative and symptomatic manner.

In the politically charged atmosphere of the late 1920s the popularity and influence of such writers as Rodney Gilbert and the strength of this reactionary influence on British coverage of China was doubly problematical. Firstly the influence of the repetition of attitudes about the Chinese that were offensive and unfriendly prevented any easy alteration in the behaviour of the British in China that was required to accommodate triumphant Chinese nationalism and the change in official British policy. Secondly it was a tremendous source of good propaganda to nationalist Chinese and other political opponents of the British presence in China.

### Chapter 3

#### British society in China in 1928

**“An empire of men - and tenth rate men at that.”<sup>1</sup>**

The British in China had mostly come to trade and reaffirmed this prime motive regularly and ritually in public, in private, to the Chinese and to each other. A significant minority had come as missionaries. These two groups formed the core of a British community composed of different, sometimes antagonistic, sub-communities and classes. Despite the apparent gulf between, for example, a member of the China Inland Mission and the average British businessman they were all, ultimately, identified by their nationality. They were allowed to engage in their separate occupations because of the historical and contemporary diplomatic activities of the British government. It is therefore possible and rewarding to talk of a British community *and* its constituent communities and to look at the unity in this diversity as well as contradiction and conflict.

In this chapter both the variety and the similarity of the structures and processes of entering, participating in and retiring from these communities will be examined. In particular the way in which new members were socialised, and the implications of the values and attitudes thereby acquired, or reinforced, for individual and communal Sino-British relations, shall be explained. This socialisation had implications for other national communities in China.<sup>2</sup> It will be shown that, despite the paramountcy of trade, the idea that the British communities were an extension of the British Empire was an important theme in the self-ascription of resident Britons. They were conscious of themselves as agents of Empire and the institutions of their society had an imperial flavour. This consciousness had serious implications for their behaviour and attitudes towards the Chinese, who were implicitly regarded as subjects, or placed in a subject relationship. An added complication was the fact that the distance between the imperial aspirations of the treaty port British and their individual and group behaviour was marked. Their imperialism reinforced the disdainful characterisations of the Chinese prevalent in metropolitan culture and became a serious obstruction to the attempts at reforming British attitudes necessitated by the triumph of Chinese nationalism by 1928.

#### **How many, who and where?**

According to the Chinese Maritime Customs there were 12,383 registered British subjects in China in 1928. In 1931 there were 13,344 in the treaty ports, concessions,

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<sup>1</sup> Benson Diaries, 19/4/30.

<sup>2</sup> For the influence of the British on the American community see Huskey, “Americans in Shanghai”, pp.35-37.

settlements and inland areas of China with a further 6,800 in Hong Kong, excluding servicemen.<sup>3</sup> British communities were spread throughout China. In 1928 there were concessions (with British controlled municipal councils) in Tianjin, Jiujiang, Shamian (Guangzhou) and Xiamen; British dominated International Concessions in Shanghai and Gulangsu (Xiamen) and the colonies of Weihaiwei and Hong Kong. By 1931 Weihaiwei and the concessions at Xiamen and Zhenjiang had been retroceded to the Chinese - Hankou and Jiujiang being handed over formally in 1927 having been seized by the *Guomindang*. Shanghai was much the largest settlement, followed by Tianjin, the others containing hundreds of Britons at the most, usually only scores.

Outside of these the pattern of settlement was dictated by trading networks (notably along the China coast, in Manchuria and along the Yangzi at Yichang and Chongqing) or patterns of missionary evangelisation. Albert Feuerwerker has calculated that in 1919 only 106 out of China's 1704 *xian* (about 6%) were without some foreign missionary presence. In their small numbers missionaries were lost in the vastness of China but there were urban concentrations - in Shanghai and Hankou especially - which made their presence felt beyond their numbers.<sup>4</sup>

The largest group within this total were businessmen - traders, bankers, manufacturers and those with mining, shipping or railway interests. The second largest group were missionaries involved in running schools, hospitals, universities, nurseries, publishing and ecumenical organisations and theological schools as well as more obvious evangelistic institutions.<sup>5</sup> Then there were those in British government service, a small but prominent number of diplomats, diplomatic staff (such as policemen and archivists), consuls and servicemen - there were troops at Tianjin, Legation guards in Beijing and gunboats on the Yangzi and Pearl rivers. There were also the employees of the Shanghai Municipal and Tianjin British Municipal Councils:- policemen, engineers, firemen, surveyors, doctors, prison wardens, accountants, chemists, teachers, musicians in the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra or brass band, and tax inspectors. There were others who serviced the treaty port communities: journalists, accountants, lawyers, estate agents, club secretaries, hoteliers, ships' pilots, brokers, doctors, travel agents, prostitutes and even piano tuners. There were Nanjing Government advisors such as Sir Frederick Whyte or W.H. Donald, and the men of the British Naval Missions, or warlord advisors such as "Two Gun" Cohen; and the staff of government agencies such as the Maritime Customs, Salt and Postal administrations; there were also those who worked for Chinese companies

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<sup>3</sup> *CYB 1930*, p.2; *CYB 1933*, p.2; *Hong Kong Administrative Reports for the Year 1932* (Hong Kong, 1933), Medical and Sanitary Report for the Year 1932, p. M30.

<sup>4</sup> Feuerwerker, *Foreign Establishment*, p.39.

<sup>5</sup> The number of British missionaries had been declining rapidly in relative terms compared to those from the United States; in 1905 half of the 3,833 missionaries in China were British and one third American, by 1920 these proportions of the 6,536 mission population had been reversed, *ibid.*, p.44.

such as the Ships' officers who worked for the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company (*Lunchuan zhaoshangju*).

While there were many families that stayed out East for more than one generation, most of these people went to China knowing that they would retire, mostly to Britain, although many chose British Columbia, after a period of two or three decades of service punctuated by lengthy periods of home leave, for home Britain remained. This further cemented the fact of their being a community abroad rather than a loose coalition of exiles sharing the same patrimony. They were seen as a homogeneous community by visitors and by the Chinese and were expected to act as such, by the Legation, for instance, which chastised or deported troublemakers and cooperated with charitable groups in assisting the passage home of the indigent. Furthermore, most people did not go out to China autonomously, or on the off-chance of employment. They went or were sent, they were met and they were moulded.

Identifiable groups with British passports or under British protection were excluded in varying degrees from this community as it defined itself, in its public discourse and especially in its memoirs and commentaries. Lower middle class and lower class Britons formed a noticeable sub-group within the British community proper. This included, for example, the men of the SMP, employees of the SMC, "outdoor" customs staff and "floating" staff of the shipping companies.<sup>6</sup> There was some overlap, Shanghai-born Britons did sometimes get jobs with the big British companies. Generally however, they lived and socialised apart from each other, although the patterns of sociability and socialisation were very similar. In proportion they formed a much smaller group than the Japanese lower middle-class community, and consequently had much less political influence on British treaty port life.<sup>7</sup> However there were clear class antagonisms, at work, at play and politically.<sup>8</sup> G.W. Swire and Sir John Pratt both agreed that municipal reforms in Tianjin, Hankou or Shanghai which gave political power to "low whites" were to be avoided.<sup>9</sup> The impotence of the "low white" when faced by the conciliatory policies of the British Government and, eventually, the treaty port oligarchs, was often

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<sup>6</sup> Accounts of this life can be found in the correspondence of Frank Harold Davies in the J. Glyn Davies and George M. Davies collections in the National Library of Wales and in Peter T. Jackson, *Commission in Chinese Waters* (London, 1938).

<sup>7</sup> On the Japanese see Mark R. Peattie, "Japanese Treaty Port Settlements in China, 1895-1937", P. Duus, R.H. Myers and M. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937* (Princeton, 1989), p.172.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, remarks on tensions between "floating" and shore staff at Butterfield and Swires in Shanghai: "the atmosphere [there was] thoroughly uncongenial" to the lower class seamen, G.W. Swire to H.W. Robertson, 16/12/27, SP ADD 15, Evidence can also be found in fiction. See, for example, John Lambourne's *Squeeze* and Warren Hill's novel *The Crystal Skull* (London, 1930) in which there is some interesting satire on the snobbery of Shanghai when a Nanjing road department store manager acquires an occult tool which gives him the power to control people's thoughts, which he uses to increase his social standing in the British community.

<sup>9</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai and Hong Kong, 18/3/27, SP ADD 1079; J.T. Pratt to G.W. Swire, 24/4/28, SP ADD 1185.

translated into the class hostility and racial hostility to be found in the pages of Bruce Lockhart's *The Showdown* or the correspondence of SMP Detective R.M. Tinkler.<sup>10</sup>

The Sephardi Jewish community certainly identified itself as British but does not appear to have been regarded as such on a social level;<sup>11</sup> for Eurasians with British protection the same applies.<sup>12</sup> Poorer Eurasians, who took advantage of “vulgar” extraterritoriality, were regarded as a nuisance by British officialdom, although outpost consuls were liable to be more sympathetic than the Foreign Office if they were of “good character, British education, and [in view of] the hardship of discontinuing registrations.”<sup>13</sup> Wherever possible protection was withheld or withdrawn and in any case only those born in Hong Kong were recognised as British protégés.<sup>14</sup> There was also an Indian community, mostly policemen or night-watchmen, and the British poor, most of whom do not feature in the public life of the concessions, except as the recipients of charity, namely tickets home.<sup>15</sup> This last group often merged with the last, British criminals, of whom there was always a presence.<sup>16</sup> Hong Kong Chinese, who were also British protégés, were naturally excluded.

In the following discussion, unless otherwise stated, the term “British community” refers to the “white”, middle and upper-middle class business community.

### **Why did they go?**

The motivation that sent most people to work in China was similar to that which sent people to work in the British Empire of which treaty port China was considered to be a part. “China” was socially more open than the institutionalized and hierarchically stuffy

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<sup>10</sup> Tinkler papers, letters to Aunt Florence, 9/1/21, 9/7/21, letters to Edith, 17/6/23, 26/6/25, 25/7/26.

<sup>11</sup> See the comments of Jack Bazalgette on the Kadoorie family and his other Jewish acquaintances, Bazalgette papers, letters to parents, 2/5/27 and 4/7/28. See also the comment on Sir Victor Sassoon by an Shanghai ex-resident reported in Harriet Sergeant, *Shanghai* (London, 1991), p.131. For details of British protégé Silas Aaron Hardoon's singularly close involvement in Shanghai and national Chinese affairs see Chiara Betta, “S.A. Hardoon: An Intercultural Intermediary in Shanghai” (unpublished conference paper, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> The nomination of Eurasian businessman W.R. McBain to the SMC in 1928 was welcomed by Swires because “he is in touch with important Chinese merchants and speaks Chinese,” BS Shanghai to JS London, 13/1/28, SP ADD 1080. Wealth did not necessarily soften British prejudices against Eurasians, personal information, Mrs Beattie Donaldson, (née White). See also the evidence offered by the trial of L. Kentwell, a Eurasian Shanghai barrister, *NCH*, 5/2/27, pp.201-202. G.W. Swire and his Hong Kong staff did not approve of the power wielded in the colony by such Eurasian businessmen as Sir Robert Hotung, JS London to BS Hong Kong, 14/3/30, JSS II 1/9; BS Hong Kong to JS London, 21/3/30, JSS III 1/8.

<sup>13</sup> Legation to FO No.162, 13/2/30, FO228\4324\2 84x.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the case of cinema manager H.C. Best, born of a British father and Chinese mother in Xiamen, whose protection was withdrawn in 1930, FO228\4073 84x 1929 and FO228\4324 84x 1930.

<sup>15</sup> The Indian population, which was 1,842 in 1930, was counted as a separate group on the SMC's census totals, see, for example, SMC, *Annual Report*, 1935, p.49.

<sup>16</sup> For an atmospheric description of indigent British life in China see Bob Moore, *Don't Call me a Crook: My True Autobiography* (London, 1935).



Empire; it was also easier to enter and less competitive than the socially more prestigious apparatus of the *Raj* and other services in the Empire.<sup>17</sup>

Missionaries apart, this society was predominantly and characteristically male. The wives - like domestic society it generally did not include single working women - were usually met in Britain or else were the daughters or relatives of treaty port families. Thereafter they usually did not work; Chinese and Eurasians were cheaper for companies to employ.<sup>18</sup>

Not surprisingly very few of the residents were attracted to China out of any sense of appreciation of its culture and civilization. Most missionaries went out to alter that culture because it was "heathen."<sup>19</sup> The criteria for assessment of candidates for the China Inland Mission, for example, placed evidence of a "call" to serve in China in particular only fourth among its requirements.<sup>20</sup> Some went expressly to offer their professional skills to the Chinese - doctors and teachers for example - whilst others felt a religious vocation for working in China that usually defied secular interpretation.<sup>21</sup> Some saw even mission service in China as social advancement. For Gladys Aylward Britain meant being "consigned eternally to "servants quarters"" in a rigid caste system. In China, even when self-supported, her status was immeasurably and instantly improved.<sup>22</sup>

As for businessmen, some had no choice in the matter - especially those who had joined multinationals such as BAT or APC who "simply got [their] marching orders and went."<sup>23</sup> Some joined companies especially to go East where they expected to achieve greater wealth, comfort and importance faster than would be possible in Britain;<sup>24</sup> some joined such companies to go back to where they had been brought up,<sup>25</sup> and others just

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<sup>17</sup> On the lack of enthusiasm for service in China in government service see P.D. Coates, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers, 1843-1943* (London, 1988), pp. 432-33; Sir Miles Lampson called the China Consular Service the "cream of the second class", Diaries, 28/10/26; others were unkind, G.W. Swire to JS London, 11/1/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>18</sup> Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (London, 1988), pp.137-43. There were exceptions, Phyllis Harrop went to Shanghai as a single woman in 1929 and worked first for the telephone company and then as secretary to Sir Victor Sassoon, Harrop, *Hong Kong Incident* (London, 1943), pp.7-12. See also the memoir of Mrs Isabel Duck, "All in a Lifetime", Duck papers, IWM.

<sup>19</sup> "We are living in a heathen country, - business, society, education, government, are all impregnated with a heathen atmosphere", H.B. Rattenbury to C.L. Andrews, 24/2/28, WMMSA, Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 388.

<sup>20</sup> CIM London Council Minutes, 13/5/31, p.317.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Ronald Rees *Life in China 1922 - 1947*, [Harrow, 1971], p.1. (Sewell Papers, PPMS 16/38); Sewell himself went "in response to the promptings of our Chinese student friends", "Early Days of Medical Education in China", Talk given at the ECA summer school, Oxford, 1929, p.1, PPMS 16/18.

<sup>22</sup> Alan Burgess, *The Small Woman* (London, 1957), p.56.

<sup>23</sup> John Logan, *China: Old and New* (Hong Kong, 1982), p.3; Maurice Lister went out on the same draft: "My feelings were one of great surprise because I'd spent a long time learning Spanish and they sent me to China.", BBC. "Lion and the Dragon", Tape Roll 38/1, p.1.

<sup>24</sup> C. King, ed., "The First Trip East - P and O via Suez" in F.H.H. King, ed., *Eastern Banking: Essays in the History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation* (London, 1983), p.205.

<sup>25</sup> Consul Sir Meyrick Hewlett's son went out with John Logan, Logan, *China*, p.3 (and personal information); Consul A.G.N. Ogden's son joined the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, (Austin Coates,

needed work, any work.<sup>26</sup> Some drifted to China because their record, criminal or otherwise, made returning to Britain difficult.<sup>27</sup> Some had come after demobilization at the end of the Great War - among them, perhaps, those arriving expressly to leave the Europe of the trenches behind. Graham Greene saw working in China for BAT as a means of escape from thwarted love and quotidian pettiness in Britain.<sup>28</sup> Others with a taste for adventure and fighting, possibly inspired by “One-Arm” Sutton or “Two-Gun” Cohen, came, for example, to work for “the local Chinese warlord.” Some, shrewdly, desired to take advantage of the tangles of extraterritoriality.<sup>29</sup>

The myth of making a quick fortune in China had evolved into a desire to enjoy the other, more reliable benefits of the foreign but familiar treaty port world - social importance, servants, spacious living and so on.<sup>30</sup> China itself was as incidental to these considerations as it was to the treaty port world; although some, brought up on a diet of literary adventure, or who read about warlords and Chinese events in the *The Times*, did see this wider setting as a source of excitement and interest.<sup>31</sup> The choice of China was frequently incidental and accidental. H.G.W. Woodhead was escaping an unhappy job and home life by following up an offer from a family friend, whilst J.T. Pratt had not considered China at all until he came upon an announcement of the Consular Examinations. Meyrick Hewlett was bullied into keeping a childhood decision to go whilst others opted for the Chinese Consular service because it was easiest to get into or were offered it after failing diplomatic service exams. Stella Benson’s husband was given the idea of joining the CMC by meeting a serving Customs officer on an Irish train.<sup>32</sup> Some came with the Shanghai Defence Force or on regular army postings and stayed: a

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*China Races* (Hong Kong, 1983), p.305) whilst Shanghai pilot W.E. Kent’s son went back to join an insurance company, Algar and Co., (personal information).

<sup>26</sup> ST - 20, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> C.Y. Jones went to Shanghai direct from a prison in Nyasaland, “Almoner’s Report”, 28/3/30, NARA SMP D3002.

<sup>28</sup> So many came after the war that the British Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai set up an employment register for them, *British Chamber of Commerce Journal* (hereafter *BCCJ*), April 1930, p.80; See also Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars* (Oxford, 1980), pp.3-15; the emotional and other reactions to the war, shortages and restrictions which motivated his “literary travellers” cannot but have been shared by many un-literary ones. Baptist Missionary Emily Pentelow “felt that by going out to China she would escape” after the death of a brother in the trenches, “Elsie” to M.E. Bowser, 7/10/27, BMSA, CH/74; Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene, Volume One: 1904-1939* (London, 1989), pp.195-96.

<sup>29</sup> D.S.I. W. Kennedy, Report on C.Y. Jones, 27/3/30, NARA SMP D3002. One “shady character”, who went to Shanghai in 1927, married the daughter of the former Cuban minister to China, and often took refuge from his creditors in the Cuban Legation, NARA SMP D6384, 18/4/36.

<sup>30</sup> See A.H. Rasmussen’s reasons for returning to Shanghai in his *China Trader*, p.171; also see D.N. Noble, *The Eagle and the Dragon: The United States Military in China, 1901-1937* (New York, 1990), Chapter 6, “Going Asiatic: Servicemen who remained in China”, pp.171-86. A description of the traditional treaty port good-life can be found in Oliver G. Ready, *Life and Sport in China* (London, 1904), especially the chapter “Anglo-Chinese Life”, pp.1-25.

<sup>31</sup> ST - 19, p.1; ST - 20, p.1; Fitzgerald, *Why China?*, p.12-13.

<sup>32</sup> Woodhead, *Journalist in China*, , p.13; Pratt, *War and Politics*, p.9; Hewlett, *Forty Years*, p.1; Grant, *Stella Benson*, p.156.

Lance Corporal looked for a job as a Godown manager, W.R. Giles became Beijing correspondent for the *Daily Mail* and Stanley Fisher an SMP constable.<sup>33</sup>

Many residents already had family connections with China - Consuls Lionel and Bertram Giles, sons of the Sinologist and ex-consul Herbert Giles,<sup>34</sup> for example, or family traditions of Imperial service.<sup>35</sup> It may also be said that service overseas provided a way of escaping the greater competition for jobs and position that mass education and a democratic mass society was slowly bringing Britain. Even the lowliest member of the British community in China could afford, or was issued with, a servant, and could feel himself part of an elite, even within the wider foreign community.<sup>36</sup> Promotion prospects were generally much better, Woodhead and W.V. Pennell both acquired positions of authority and respect in treaty port society much faster than they could ever have hoped to as journalists in Britain.<sup>37</sup> Compared to Britain the treaty port business communities were less class-aware and more meritocratic but by no means as egalitarian as treaty port lore claimed.<sup>38</sup>

Surrounding, and encompassing, the British community itself was a supposedly cosmopolitan world. Its American characteristics appealed to some but repelled most.<sup>39</sup> This cosmopolitanism, whilst being an unavoidable fact in Shanghai and Tianjin, was not at all accepted by the British communities, which were widely felt to still be at least Edwardian in their habits and social niceties. This was true of the smaller ports especially but was a common feature of expatriate life. It was also an aping of the life of the British

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<sup>33</sup> *BCCJ*, March 1928, p.72, "Employment Register", "Applicant, at present Lance-Corporal in Shaforce"; *NCH*, 10/3/28, p.388, 20/10/28, p.110; An impression of the comfortable benefits of a posting to China can be gained from the short memoir of then Lance-Corporal F. Robinson, Robinson papers, IWM and A.C. Boreham, "The Saga of a Suffolk Soldier", *passim*, Boreham papers, IWM, 91/21/1. For naval crews there were similar advantages: "Out here the Chinese do all the under-water work, scraping, painting and refitting whereas in Malta the bottom has to be scraped by the ship's company", Hayes Papers, IWM, Diary, 12/2/32. Civilian naval officers on the China coast had "more stewards per man than on any European ship, and we had personal stewards", ST - 1, p.1.

<sup>34</sup> Their niece married a British Army officer who was serving with the Legation for a year - Norman, BBC "Lion and the Dragon", Tape Roll 8, p.4. See also W.G.C. Graham, A.L. Scott (Coates, *China Consuls*, pp.540, 537) and Hewlett with his "Uncle Archer", *Forty Years*, p.1.

<sup>35</sup> Leslie Gill, BBC "Lion and the Dragon", Tape Roll 21, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> Hewlett was issued with his "boy" on his first day (*Forty Years*, p.3), as was J.A. Sinclair, BBC "Lion and the Dragon", Tape Roll 4, p.1; A.D. Rasmussen, as a customs "outdoorman", possibly the lowest of the foreign low, inherited his predecessor's boy, *China Trader*, pp.8-11; Tinkler Papers, Letter to Aunt Florence, 22/8/19.

<sup>37</sup> Woodhead, *Journalist in China*, p.49; W.F.V. Pennell, *A Lifetime With The Chinese* (Hong Kong, 1974), p.89.

<sup>38</sup> Teichman, *Affairs Of China*, p.281; Hauser, *City for Sale*, p.263.

<sup>39</sup> Tinkler Papers, Letter to Edith, 11/3/25. The novelist J.G. Ballard was born in Shanghai and has made much of the city's Americana in his novels and other works; see, for example, *Empire of the Sun* (London, 1984) and *The Kindness of Women* (London, 1991). Raphael Samuel is quite right to point out that "The most virulent Anglocentrism of the war and post war years was directed,... against... the Americans"; this was true of the inter-war period as well, R. Samuel "Introduction: Exciting to be English", R. Samuel, ed. *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity Volume 1* (London and New York, 1989), pp.xxvi-xxvii.

in colonial India.<sup>40</sup> There were rigid distinctions based on hierarchy (only managers of a certain seniority could use one end of the Shanghai Club bar), wealth, profession and address. It was a distortion of British domestic values but was not in opposition to them. In fact the smallness of most communities served to heighten class-distinctions.

As Jonathan Spence has rightly noted of his “China Helpers”: “implicit in most of their actions is..., a desire not so much to help China as to help themselves. [They] left for China to avoid “feared or experienced frustrations at home.”<sup>41</sup> There were those who went who hated British society because it was too reactionary and those who felt it was too democratic.<sup>42</sup> In the wider materialistic sense, of course, the British community as a whole was there to help themselves.<sup>43</sup> Their success was manifested in the buildings and public life of the larger ports, Shanghai, Tianjin, Hankou and Shamian.<sup>44</sup> Their ostentation and vulgarity appalled some visitors whilst others found it merely suburban and provincial<sup>45</sup> - this despite the community’s self-images of service, charity and imperial duty which were hammered home in the pages of the *North China Daily News* and in memoirs.<sup>46</sup>

### Socialisation

Ignorance of China before departure or misinformed images derived from treaty port propaganda and fiction were not, however, a particularly important point on their own. Much more significant was in what they learnt, and how, when they got there and the ways in which socialisation reinforced and justified the attitudes taught by the China experts:

Captain Miners... gave me a friendly welcome and that first evening we sat on his verandah while he informed me of the prevailing local conditions and gave me a preliminary briefing on my new duties. I remember feeling a little surprised to learn that social contacts with Chinese were rare and were not encouraged by either the Chinese or the Foreign community.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>40</sup> On “Edwardian” China see John Maitland Philips, to Philip Suttill Jones, 28/9/24, IWM DS/MISC/55, (hereafter J.M. Philips Papers); C. Cook, *The Lion and Dragon: British Voices From the China Coast* (London, 1985), pp.110-13; Stella Benson approvingly recorded one description of the “serviette civilization” of Hong Kong, Diary, 17/6/30. On the influence of the Indian pattern on British colonial societies see Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (Basingstoke, 1987), pp.70-75; on that pattern see Charles Allen, *Plain Tales From the Raj: Images of British India in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1975), pp.82-98.

<sup>41</sup> J. Spence, *The China Helpers: Western advisers in China, 1620-1960* (London, 1969), p.292.

<sup>42</sup> Tinkler Papers, Letter to Edith, 11/3/25; Fussell, *Abroad*, pp.15-23.

<sup>43</sup> “God helps those who help themselves” claimed Ranald McDonald when urging the Shanghai foreign ratepayers to refuse an increase in the number of Chinese councillors in 1930, see below, chapter 4, SMC, *Annual Report*, 1930, p.21.

<sup>44</sup> Jon Huebner, “Architecture of the Shanghai Bund”, *Papers on Far Eastern History*, 39 (March 1989), pp. 127-65.

<sup>45</sup> “Pompous toadstools... trying to give materialism importance”, Acton, *Memoirs*, p.292; Jackson, *China only Yesterday*, p.25; Sir W. Hayter, *A Double Life* (London, 1974), pp.52-53.

<sup>46</sup> Green, *Foreigner in China*, p.14.

<sup>47</sup> W.J. Moore, *Shanghai Century or “Tungsha Flats to Soochow Creek”* (Ilfracombe, 1966), p.31.

This was not unusual even if it was a little explicit.<sup>48</sup> The insularity of Chinese society was in this way frequently stated to be the justification for such behaviour.

Most institutions “met” their new arrivals and showed them the ropes. Hewlett and novice consular companions were met at Beijing station by an earlier draft who “although they had only preceded us by five months, ...made us feel that they were old hands”; the students were immediately issued with a room, a servant and a teacher.<sup>49</sup> Whilst there was probably more of this implicit education than the explicit lessons given by Captain Miners, J.A. Sinclair, for example, was bluntly warned by Sir Erich Teichman against sinophilia: “don’t forget you’re British.”<sup>50</sup>

Most missionaries after training in Britain for a year or two, went first to a language school: the North China Union Language School in Beijing, an American school in Nanjing, Coastal Schools at Xiamen and Shantou or the CIM Training Schools in Anping and Yangzhou.<sup>51</sup> After language training they would be sent either straight to their designated station where most of the learning was done on the job or first to a different nearby station for further language study.

Most arrivals in China would be very young, unmarried (by company or mission society regulation) and leaving home for the first time. Their life seems to have been an extension of the minor public schools they had mostly been to. Starting on the boat the men teamed up, later on in bachelor “messes” or more informally in clubs they lived, worked, ate and played together.<sup>52</sup> It was in both the short-term and long-term interests of “griffins” (as new young male staff were known) to fit in from the very start, from the voyage out. In the short-term this was to overcome loneliness and disorientation, and in the long-term to ensure a smooth professional future. One businessman recalled that:

First class travel for juniors was an introduction to the life they were expected to lead as a form of education. A bank needed its young to circulate, play games, etc., and often the friends one made rose with you to high seniority.<sup>53</sup>

Firms also required their staff not to compromise or bankrupt themselves in pursuing the delights of being monied and abroad for the first time. To that end, for example, the new Masonic Club opened in 1928 was described as:

a social hall, where the younger Masons could associate and spend happy evenings together rather than that they should be forced to seek relaxation in less favourable places.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> IOLR, Bazalgette, 11/5/27, p.3.

<sup>49</sup> Hewlett, *Forty Years*, pp.2-3.

<sup>50</sup> J.A. Sinclair, BBC Tape Roll 4, p.3.

<sup>51</sup> F.K. Sanders, “The Training of Missionaries in China”, E.C. Lobenstine and Warnshuis, eds., *CMYB 1918*, pp.311-20.

<sup>52</sup> Lister, memoirs, p.13, Cook, *Lion and the Dragon*, pp.17-18; King, “The First Trip East”, p.212-13.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.213. In fact the process began before the staff left Britain, see, for example *CET*, 14/11/29, p.784 and “Eastern Banks’ Swimming Gala”, *CET*, 26/9/28, p.71

<sup>54</sup> *NCH*, 28/1/28, p.140.

Worried about the fact that “Shanghai for a young man fresh from home is the devil” J.K. Swire started a riding club at Butterfield and Swire in the city. He was hoping to influence new arrivals with a “very good riding clique” there who “go to bed early and ride before breakfast, keep fit and do not waste their money on wine women and song.”<sup>55</sup> The cost of living in Shanghai was felt to be appreciably rising all the time. Temptations and indebtedness amongst younger men was felt to be a real danger. In 1928 employees “once of excellent character, ... have had to be shipped home, simply because they have gone to pieces from night life and easy credit”. The cashless chit system was blamed. Civil actions for debt would ruin a career - especially as the bad publicity was felt to be “letting the side down”.<sup>56</sup> Some took more drastic action, criminal or suicidal.<sup>57</sup>

Despite these problems, and to counter the treaty ports’ reputation (“17,000 shady characters”<sup>58</sup>), there was a widespread belief that the quality of the young British in China was up to that expected of the Empire. The virtues of manliness and other characterizations were identified in the obituary of a 26 year old banker, T.E. Tricker: a horseman, a shooter, a Volunteer and “a true presentation of the standard Englishman, for he was bluff honesty personified.”<sup>59</sup> A commentator in the CIM journal *China’s Millions* put it well when he wrote that “the average businessman in China today is a specially selected man, a man who has learnt to play the game in the public schools and universities of his homeland”. This is the familiar idealised description of the young Briton, fair, firm, sporty and an Imperialist.<sup>60</sup>

This ideal was not matched by the reality of treaty port behaviour. The majority of British residents were not “specially selected” and did not “play the game”. For missionary E.R. Hughes British businessmen did not live up to the gentlemanly standards they aspired to, notably in their relations with the Chinese.<sup>61</sup> Visitors often remarked on

<sup>55</sup> J.K. Swire to G.W. Swire, 11/5/25, SP ADD 1079. The club closed for lack of interest in 1933, JS London to BS Shanghai, 24/3/33, SP ADD 1082.

<sup>56</sup> NCH, 30/6/28, p.551; 21/4/28, p.93. For examples see NARA SMP D3708: “Whereabouts of D.A. Fowler”, 7/6/32, SMP D3002: D.S.I. Kennedy on Allen, an ex-Shanghai policeman, 27/3/30.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, “D.A. Rushton alias D.A. Berkeley-Rushton”, 30/7/31, NARA SMP D2610; “Temptations were too much”, and too costly, for Policeman S.A. Fisher - barely a year out of the SDF - who was jailed for larceny, J.R. Llewellyn got six months for stealing a pair of trousers, his night school teaching obviously not paying enough, NCH, 20/10/28, p.110, 16/6/28, p.478. It was not just Shanghai’s problem, the Beijing Legation was short of accommodation space for its civilian wireless telegraph operators and lodged them in a hotel outside the Legation Quarter: “This in itself was conducive neither to good discipline nor to the satisfactory conduct of the men... two have proved thoroughly unsatisfactory, having incurred debts, taken to drink and other excesses”. One was dismissed but still treated with understanding leniency by the Minister, Lampson to C-in-C, S/O, 21/11/28, FO228\3745\24 7a, “Dismissal of Mr J Milner”; to FO No.1525, 5/12/28, FO228\3745\26 7a.

<sup>58</sup> An anonymous “socialist swine” was here being quoted by the very shady R.M. Tinkler, Tinkler Papers, Letter to Edith, 28/3/27.

<sup>59</sup> NCH, 14/1/28, p.54. See Mangan, *Games Ethic and Imperialism*, pp.18-19; and also E. Ingram, “The Raj as daydream: The Pukka Sahib as Henty Hero in Simla, Chandrapore, and Kyauktada”, Gordon Martel, ed., *Studies in British Imperial History: Essays in Honour of A.P. Thornton* (London, 1986), pp.159-77.

<sup>60</sup> *China’s Millions*, August 1929, p.123.

<sup>61</sup> E.R. Hughes to Crowe, 15/12/32, BT 60/31/5/65.

the violent behaviour of foreigners towards the Chinese and diplomatic records show that British residents were often guilty of this.<sup>62</sup> Violence was common enough to enter Shanghai slang; eating *waiguohuotui* [foreign ham] meant receiving the all too frequent kicks aimed at rickshaw pullers by foreign passengers [see figure 4, following page], too frequent, according to American lawyer N.F. Allman, for this “common offense” to be viewed seriously by the American Supreme Court in Shanghai.<sup>63</sup> The fabled cheapness of human life in China could be catching, as evidenced by the famous Peters case in 1935.<sup>64</sup>

### **A Network of Lives that Intersect**

For many people this was their first taste of life outside school - or a brief apprenticeship at offices in London.<sup>65</sup> Missionaries had usually spent a year or two studying at colleges such as Carey Hall in Birmingham before being sent out to China.

Companies wanted efficient, hard-working and hard-playing young businessmen, missions wanted energetic and linguistically capable evangelists, new arrivals wanted to find their places and establish themselves quickly.

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<sup>62</sup> For examples of reported aggression see Jackson, *China Only Yesterday*, p.32; Hosie, *A Chinese Lady*, pp.82-83; see, for example, Maze papers, S/O Letters, Shanghai, 1927, Maze to I.G., 9/9/27 “Assaults on Chinese Tidewaiters”; “One Sanders, a young Englishman... appears to have emerged early in the evening and in a state of semi-intoxication from a cabaret... and to have taken exception to a Chinese chauffeur who he imagined was laughing at him. He pursued the man in order to punch his head...”, W. Russell Brown to Lampson, Hankow S/O, 18/2/30, FO228\4312\164 84. Similar cases can be found in Shanghai No.172, 3/9/30, FO228\4317\388 84 and Shanghai No.329, 2/12/30, FO228\4284\4 69h. After A.H. Mills was mugged in Shanghai he “would have killed a Chink if I could have found one by himself on the way home”, *From Piccadilly to Devils Island*, p.205.

<sup>63</sup> Yan Fusun, *Shanghai suyu dacidian*, [Dictionary of Shanghai Colloquialisms] (Shanghai, 1924, [Facsimile edition, Tokyo, 1971]), pp.30-31; N.F. Allman, *Shanghai Lawyer* (New York, 1943), pp.96.

<sup>64</sup> Peters, an SMP Sergeant was tried with a companion for the cold-blooded murder of a sick Chinese beggar, British public opinion was in his favour and he was acquitted despite overwhelming evidence as to his guilt, *NCH*, 12/2/36, pp.278-80, 19/2/36, pp.321-22. This was not an unexpected result. Of an earlier case the Shanghai Consul General remarked, “My impression was that the jury would never bring in a verdict of “guilty” against a “white” British subject charged with murder or manslaughter of a Chinese”, Shanghai No.172, 1/6/29, FO228\3980\3 20k.

<sup>65</sup> Benson Dairies, 20/12/29.





They established themselves by joining a club, a volunteer corps (a “social unit which partakes very largely of the nature of a club”<sup>66</sup>), the Police Specials,<sup>67</sup> a Masonic lodge, a sports club, an old boys association, a church.<sup>68</sup> These institutions formed informal and formal networks of association and they tended to shape and characterize the community. Some were extensions of networks from home - schools or lodges, for instance, which provided a ready entrée into society.<sup>69</sup> With such a variety of competing and differing reasons for being in China, it is clear that only through the institutions and processes of socialisation could a sense of community have been established.

This communal structure reinforced values acquired in Britain such as those associated with public schools: imperialism, militarism and sportiness, and the ethos of public service.<sup>70</sup> The doctrines of service and militarism were catered for by treaty port volunteer corps, which in Shanghai an estimated one third of eligible British men had joined in 1928 - the highest national percentage.<sup>71</sup> Traditionally they had no choice in the matter; this had changed by 1928 but informal pressures were probably still strong.<sup>72</sup> Sportiness was characteristic of treaty port life from the earliest days, so much so that the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank sometimes asked its London branch to send out new staff with specific sporting talents.<sup>73</sup> These were middle class, masculine values. Patriotism was also at a premium, hence the national associations and the exaggerated importance of national days and the King’s Birthday.

New values were also inculcated through these media: isolation from the Chinese - distance from the other national groups, loyalty to the firm, to the British enterprise in China and to their race - which also involved publicly impeccable social behaviour. The heightened Englishness of the treaty ports was a rejection of the Chinese world which

<sup>66</sup> NCH, 22/6/28, pp.503-504. This was also quite a usual function of the volunteer force in Britain, the Territorial Army, P. Dennis, *The Territorial Army 1906-1940* (London, 1987), pp.152-53, 167-70.

<sup>67</sup> 500 strong, of whom approximately 320 undertook routine duties 5 days a week, *Shanghai Publicity Bureau News Bulletin*, No.2, August 1928, p.15.

<sup>68</sup> Arnhold’s-employed H.S. Butterfield’s father was “anxious that his son should come into touch with the right sort of people at Hankou” wrote WMMS China Secretary C.W. Andrews to H.B. Rattenbury, 1/3/29, WMMSA China Hupeh fiche 392.

<sup>69</sup> The two could be linked but there don’t appear to have been any specific public-school lodges in China, P.J. Rich, “Public School Freemasonry in the Empire: “Mafia of the Mediocre”?”, J.A. Mangan, ed., *“Benefits Bestowed”?* *Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1988), pp.174-92. School could sometimes provide networks of possible employees, the Kailan Mining Association tried to trace the “fag” of one of their staff to offer him a job, E.J. Nathan to P.C. Young, 6/2/25, Nathan Papers.

<sup>70</sup> See Mangan, *Games Ethic and Imperialism*, *passim*.

<sup>71</sup> NCH, 16/6/28, p.467. Anne Summers is wrong in asserting that “Popular British militarism after 1918 had nowhere very much to go” (“Edwardian Militarism”, Samuel, ed., *Patriotism*, p.254), The notions of the facility of military solutions and the importance of military organisation had strengthened their hegemonic grip after 1918, if only because so many of the male population went through the military experience. See also Dennis, *Territorial Army*, p.261.

<sup>72</sup> NCH, 16/5/28, p.455, “Needs of the SVC”; Woodhead, *Journalist*, p.15.; King, *Eastern Banking*, p.226; W.H. Evans Thomas, *Vanished China: Far Eastern Banking Memories* (London, 1952), p.50.

<sup>73</sup> C. Cook “The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in Lombard St”, King, ed., *Eastern Banking*, p.200. Maurice Springfield got a job with the Shanghai Municipal Police because he hunted and his father was a master of hounds, *Hunting Opium and other Scents* (Halesworth, 1966), p.31.

otherwise swamped them, physically as much as metaphorically. The great clichéd danger was of “going native”, which was widely interpreted and generally meant showing too much interest in things Chinese. The danger was two-fold: eccentricity and deracination. Sinclair was warned against losing the right perspective by Sir Erich Teichman, when his enthusiasm for the language seemed to be getting the better of him: that those who went Chinese were “no use to us”.<sup>74</sup> Popular mythology held that such enthusiasm was dangerous, as was study of the language itself:

foreigners who really study and master Chinese (no mean feat) change. To the dense they appear ‘a bit queer’ but it’s just the bald fact that their outlook on life becomes partly Chinese and the result is often the quaintest of eccentrics.<sup>75</sup>

Reginald Johnston was frequently pointed out as the prime example of such eccentricity. “They lived pleasant lives” wrote Dobson of those who went Chinese “yet were never much good to the tribe anymore”, a comment which neatly summed up the expected pattern of race-defined loyalties.<sup>76</sup>

An acceptable interest in China was expressed in “curio” collecting. The acquisition of Chinese antiques, a hobby which enthralled many residents, although transparently evidence of an appreciation for things Chinese actually represented in many cases a refusal to acknowledge any interest or validity in modern China and modern Chinese culture.<sup>77</sup> It paralleled the activities of the sinologues of the Royal Asiatic Society whose interests also lay firmly in the distant past. Some ran curio shops or businesses themselves, others were involved in less legitimate ventures.<sup>78</sup>

Few Britons seem to have felt any attraction to the danger of going native. The socialising patterns of the following appear to be reliable examples of the interests and loyalties of the majority. Noel Kent, son of a Shanghai Pilot, returned to China after schooling to work for and then manage a firm of architects. In 1924 he joined the elite Light Horse of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps. He was a ratepayer with four votes on the SMC, a member of the Shanghai Club, the Country Club, the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club and on the committee of the Hungjao Golf Club: he also raced his pony at the Shanghai Race Club. These activities would have involved him in meeting a wide variety of the Shanghai British. He was also a mason.<sup>79</sup> R.M. Tinkler, an SMP Detective Constable and

<sup>74</sup> BBC, *Lion and the Dragon*, Tape Roll 9/1 p.3.

<sup>75</sup> J.M. Philips Papers, letter to P.S. Jones, 15/12/24.

<sup>76</sup> See the memoirs of O.W. Philips (no relation) on Johnston who was: “Sinophile to a degree which tended to warp his judgment on any Anglo-Chinese issue, had that indefinable eccentric something that pervades all those westerners who have made a deep study of China and Chinese,” IWM PP/MCR/153 pp.214/5; Dobson, *China Cycle*, p.50.

<sup>77</sup> Lampson Diaries, *passim.*; Denton Welch, *Maiden Voyage* (London, 1943), *passim.*

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, the fictional but realistic Mrs Mascot in Acton’s *Peonies and Ponies* (London, 1941); Shanghai lawyer and China expert Auxion De Ruffé owned a shop, NARA SMP D4025; Trevor-Roper, *Hidden Life*, p.113.

<sup>79</sup> Noel Essington Kent, manager of Algar and Co., Shanghai, Letterbook and other papers, *passim.*

later Inspector, joined a club on arrival in China in 1919, then the Masonic Lodge Erin and through that the Shanghai Masonic Club. As an ex-soldier he joined the United Services Association. He was, like most of his compatriots, a keen shot, frequently hiring a boat with friends for the purpose. In his earlier days he took night classes.<sup>80</sup> As an “Outdoor” Customs worker (“almost like the untouchables in India”) A.H. Rasmussen joined the socially less-prestigious of the two clubs in Zhenjiang but his later successful business career for H.E. Arnhold and Company was accompanied by a successful Masonic career.<sup>81</sup> Jack Bazalgette, a member of the Shanghai Defence Force stationed in Shanghai from 1927 to 1928, organized Old-Boys’ meetings for fellow pupils from his prep school meeting - in this way, a Consul, an accountant, three fellow soldiers, and businessmen from the APC, Butterfield and Swire, Brunner Mond (ICI) and Lever Brothers.<sup>82</sup>

Newspaper obituaries and appreciations provide similar pictures of a sociable but introverted society in which little more than formulaic protestations of Sino-British fraternity were felt necessary. The SVC, the Race Club and a social club or two and an association - national, veteran or similar, were the social institutions that characterized and satisfied the treaty port resident. The informal social life was busy and mythologized at the time but was rarely any more mixed.<sup>83</sup>

### **Clubs and Suchlike**

In 1925 there were an estimated 70 “foreign institutions” in Tianjin, including Churches, tennis clubs, Masonic lodges, national societies and national clubs. In Shanghai there were 108 associations and 158 clubs alone listed in one directory - including sports clubs, work-related clubs, philanthropic associations, even a South African War Veterans Society. There were also 16 British Masonic lodges.<sup>84</sup>

The Club provided accommodation and recreational facilities, a library, a bar, meeting hall, and so on. Shanghai was described as “the city in which a man is lost if he has not at least one club at his disposal.”<sup>85</sup> So important was it that attempts to bring the foreign and Chinese communities together usually involved the setting up of a new club. Whilst in itself inoffensive and necessary, the function of the club abroad was more than social, as it usually served as an informal political centre where the locally powerful met and discussed, especially in Shanghai. By remaining nationally and racially exclusive it

<sup>80</sup> Tinkler Papers, letter to Edith, 27/11/21, then *passim*..

<sup>81</sup> Rasmussen, *China Trader*, p.5; *The History of Freemasonry in Northern China 1913-1937* (Shanghai, 1938), pp.107, 172,

<sup>82</sup> IOLR, Bazalgette Papers, Letters, 5/4/27, 16/6/27.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, the vision of Shanghai offered by one American guide book, Maurine Karns and Pat Patterson, *Shanghai: High Lights, Low Lights, Tael Lights* (Shanghai, 1936).

<sup>84</sup> O.D. Rasmussen, *Tientsin: An Illustrated Outline History* (Tianjin, 1925), p.304; *Shanghai Commercial and Shopping Pocket Guide* (Shanghai, c.1935), pp.391-409.

<sup>85</sup> *NCH*, 18/8/28, p.287.

tended to emphasize the quasi-colonial character of the British community. It also failed to represent the real balance of power amongst the differing communities within Shanghai itself, an imbalance that was being formally recognized after 1928 by increasing Chinese representation on the Council of the SMC.<sup>86</sup> This contrasts with the Cècle Sportif Française, to which access was much less restricted, the American Club, which permitted Chinese to become members in 1929 and the German Club Concordia, which admitted Chinese members in 1917.<sup>87</sup>

### Freemasonry

Freemasonry in North China dated from 1849 when the first lodge was granted a warrant in Shanghai, and amongst the foreign communities it appears to have been very popular.<sup>88</sup> In 1928 there were 848 members of the 11 lodges in the North China District and 939 in 1931.<sup>89</sup> Some lodges catered for particular groups of foreign residents - St. Georges Lodge, No.4575, for example, which was mainly for SMC employees, or the China Fleet Lodge of instruction at Shanghai and a subsequent lodge at Weihaiwei for naval masons.<sup>90</sup> Membership included newspapermen (O.M. Green), Consuls such as Sir Herbert Phillips (Consul General in Shanghai 1937-40) or the Legation's Commercial Councillor Louis Beale, the Judge of the British Supreme Court in Shanghai (Sir Peter Grain), merchants and Municipal Councillors such as W.J.N. Dyer (also R. Calder Marshall one-time Chairman of the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce), missionaries, such as Frank Rawlinson, but also many others, providing a cross-section of treaty port society.<sup>91</sup> However, some lodges were more fraternal than others, the Union Lodge Tientsin, for example, had a recognisably purely lower-middle class membership while others were more socially refined.<sup>92</sup>

Membership was frequently plural and Lodges would visit each other. R.M. Tinkler described one such visit of his Shanghai Lodge to the Doric Lodge, Chinkiang

<sup>86</sup> Woodcock, *British in the Far East*, pp.185-90. Social exclusiveness was also guaranteed by the high cost of membership, the entrance fee for the Hungjao Golf Club was 200 taels in 1930, N.E. Kent, Letterbook, 25/9/30.

<sup>87</sup> G.H. Gompertz, *China in Turmoil: Eye-Witness, 1924-1948* (London, 1967), p.80; Huskey, "Americans in Shanghai", p.173; Françoise Kreissler, *L'action culturelle allemande en chine: De la fin du XiXe siècle à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Paris, 1989), pp.15-16.

<sup>88</sup> F.M. Gratton, *The History of Freemasonry in Shanghai and Northern China*, revised by R.S. Ivy (Tianjin, 1913), p.303.

<sup>89</sup> *Calendar of the District of Northern China (E.C.)* (Shanghai, 1937), p.14.

<sup>90</sup> *Freemasonry in Northern China 1913-1937*, p.139; Christopher Haffner, *The Craft in the East* (Hong Kong, 1977), pp.169-70.

<sup>91</sup> *Freemasonry in Northern China 1913-37*, p.319; C. Haffner, *Amoy: The Port and the Lodge: The Corinthian Lodge of Amoy No1806 E.C.* (Hong Kong, 1978), p.102. On Rawlinson see J.L. Rawlinson, *Rawlinson, The Recorder and China's Revolution: A Topical Biography of Frank Joseph Rawlinson* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1990): Rawlinson appears embarrassed by his father's masonry, it merits one and a half lines of text, yet his tombstone was decorated with masonic, not Christian symbols, (p.380, facing p.603.)

<sup>92</sup> W.S. Sims, *The Story of Union Lodge No 1951, E.C., Tientsin, North China* (Tianjin, 1931), Appendix "A" "Chronological List of Members".

(Zhenjiang). For Tinkler Lodge membership represented social advancement, enabling him to join a better club and cement himself further into Shanghai; in 1923 he was acting secretary of the Lodge and in 1925-26 Master.<sup>93</sup> A.H. Rasmussen's climb from Customs Outdoorman to manager for Arnhold and Co. was accompanied by his enthusiastic masonry.<sup>94</sup> Others were already masons and this would have made assimilation into treaty port society easier for them.

## Women<sup>95</sup>

Whilst some British women did work in the treaty ports, for most of these the only work was secretarial. Others were teachers or nurses with the SMC and in private hospitals. In 1928 it was calculated that only 4 foreign women in Shanghai were of sufficient seniority to sign "per pro" for their companies.<sup>96</sup> Women had begun working for British companies during the Great War, Swires employed their first in 1915, and there were twelve in 1917-18.<sup>97</sup> The prospects for employment were felt to be worsening, especially as many daughters of treaty port families took secretarial and other jobs before marrying.<sup>98</sup> Lower class women could be found running boarding houses or caf  s whilst in 1934 there were two recorded British cabaret dancing partners in Shanghai's International Settlement. It is probable that there were more, and that some British women were employed by the foreign brothels in the city's Kiangse and Foochow roads.<sup>99</sup>

Stella Benson felt that British "Women are never apropos or relevant in China - they are never people - only ladies - a sort of social backwater."<sup>100</sup> She was right about

<sup>93</sup> Tinkler papers, letters to Edith, 27/11/21, 10/10/23, 16/12/25. He was not a mason before he went to China.

<sup>94</sup> *Freemasonry in Northern China 1913-37*, p.107, 207.

<sup>95</sup> Little has been written on British women's experiences of life in China itself, Hong Kong excepted. Some material can be found in Cook, *Lion and the Dragon*, passim., and in memoirs such as Averil Mackenzie-Grieve, *A Race of Green Ginger* (London, 1959), and Bridge, *Facts and Fictions*. For the American experience see Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven and London, 1984).

<sup>96</sup> *NCH*, 28/7/28, pp.149, 153. Stella Benson first went to Hong Kong as a teacher then as a secretary to Beijing, Grant, *Stella Benson*, p.148-52.

<sup>97</sup> C. Drage, *Taikoo* (London, 1970), pp.216, 225. Unlike Britain the women stayed on at work in the East, they were cheaper. In 1932 there were at least 24 of them, mostly single, working for Swires, *Directory of China and Japan*, 1932, passim..

<sup>98</sup> *NCH*, 19/5/28, p.307, "A Dimming Paradise".

<sup>99</sup> On the cabaret dancers see the report dated 9/3/34 in NARA SMP D5695. On foreign prostitution see Percy Finch, *Shanghai and Beyond* (New York, 1955), pp.34-49. There were 17 licensed foreign prostitutes in Hong Kong in 1930, Susanna Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong: Western Women in the British Colony, 1841-1941* (Hong Kong, 1991), pp.249-50.

<sup>100</sup> Benson Diaries, 21/2/30. It is hard to accept the applicability here of Janice Brownfoot's claim that British women in Malaya - because of their different educational experience - were less infused with Imperial ideas than men. Nor were all the men there, or in Shanghai, "subject to a narrow, standardised public-school training" so that the women were therefore "more open-minded and adaptable... to the realities of the colonies". Socialisation took place in China itself amongst the British communities and was a very effective finishing school. The women appear to have been no worse and no better than the men; J.

the circles in which she moved as a *wife*. For most middle-class women in the larger settlements there was no question of work nor was there any question of access to real power in their communities. There was, however, much to do. There was the Tientsin Women's Club or the British Women's Association in Shanghai which was one of a number of such national organisations catering for the "social backwater" with its needlecraft, social service, sports and arts, drama and music departments.<sup>101</sup> Charitable and other such organisations were also numerous. There were drama societies, sport, the races, (and from 1928 the hugely popular greyhounds), the paper hunt, servants to supervise and mahjong to play. On a smaller scale these patterns were copied in the outposts if numbers were sufficient. A "Ladies Committee" led by the Consul's wife organised the Ningbo Empire Day Celebrations in 1928, as did the women of Hankou. Mostly however their relationships were more informal and centred on club life.<sup>102</sup>

Very little of this charitable and recreational work brought them into direct or more than token contact with the Chinese, nor was it intended to. Nor, it must be said, outside of more or less conservative Chinese society would it be expected. The Social Service Division of the BWA was "for the relief of needy British women stranded in this port" and during 1927-28 most charitable energies were directed at supporting the SDF troops.<sup>103</sup> These sometimes absurdly overlapping clubs, associations and committees existed to provide something for the women to do as well as a mutual support structure. They were also expressive of the values and ideas which had brought the British to China in the first place. The BWA for example was to be a founder member of the pro-Japanese Shanghai British Residents Association.<sup>104</sup>

## Power

The larger communities were more oligarchic than autocratic, being controlled by the bigger China Houses and local notables. Gerontocratic might also be an apt description. Age signified power and promotion was still largely through dead mens' shoes.<sup>105</sup> In Shanghai British representation on the SMC was dominated by Jardines, Swires and other big businesses. Elections were avoided where possible through gentlemen's agreements about who should and who should not stand, while voting was

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Brownfoot, "Sisters under the skin: Imperialism and the Emancipation of women in Malaya, c.1891-1941", J. Mangan, ed., *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1990), p.49.

<sup>101</sup> Rasmussen, *Tientsin*, pp.257-58; *NCH*, 11/2/28, p.243; 21/1/28, p.83; 24/3/28, p.489.

<sup>102</sup> *NCH*, 2/6/28, p.367, 371.

<sup>103</sup> *NCH*, 11/2/28, p.243.

<sup>104</sup> Thorne, *Limits of Foreign Policy*, pp.45-46. Its representative on the BRA was Mrs J.T. Ford, wife of the SMC's Treasurer and Comptroller, *BCCJ*, December 1931, pp.310-11.

<sup>105</sup> Dobson, *China Cycle*, p.12; Money Penny Papers, IWM, unpublished memoir, "Ningpo More Far", p.32.

rarely enthusiastic.<sup>106</sup> The franchise was restricted to avoid the danger of a politicisation of the ballot and possible mobilisation of the “low white” vote.<sup>107</sup> Despite this the conservatism of the British voters was to cause headaches for the oligarchs when they set themselves on a reformist course.

Other groups, clubs and associations were run by a limited number of notables who sat on committees and took turns to preside.<sup>108</sup> Some of these organisations, such as the China Association, the British Chamber of Commerce, the China Committee and later the British Residents’ Association were possessed of some power or influence. Most of the posts so held were voluntary which makes this “musical chairs” more understandable but these positions signified social standing and were also expressive of the integrity of the British community as an entity separate from the wider community of Shanghai. The same applies on a smaller scale to the other communities.

### The Outports

This was the name given to the smaller communities; there were the settled ones such as Xiamen, Shantou, Fuzhou, Qingdao, Yantai, Zhenjiang, Jiujiang, Changsha, Hankou and Chongqing, and the smaller ones scattered through China along the railway and river networks. Some found the quietness and the opportunities for social status, sport and saving money very agreeable.<sup>109</sup> Others found them claustrophobic and petty, full of what Hyam has called the “*misery of Empire*”.<sup>110</sup>

Many young businessmen of the larger companies on arrival in China first had to work in the “up country” distribution agencies. This included the sugar and insurance businesses of Butterfield and Swire, Oil for the APC and tobacco for BAT. The “up country” experience involved a great deal of rough living and functioned as a rite of passage in which they learnt the language and understood how to negotiate with Chinese.

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<sup>106</sup> See *NCH*, 29/2/28, p.303 for an announcement that no elections will be held that year as there were only 4 candidates for the 4 vacant places.

<sup>107</sup> J.T. Pratt to G.W. Swire, 24/4/28, SP ADD 1185.

<sup>108</sup> In 1928 for example, the Chief Judge of the Supreme Court, Sir Peter Grain, an enthusiastic Mason, was made President of the Royal Society of St George as well as being President of the Shanghai Polo Club and a Committee member of the foreign YMCA; S.C. Young, who worked for the SMC, a Mason, was also a warden of Holy Trinity Cathedral, on the committee of the Shanghai Recreation Club whilst his wife was Secretary of the Girls Friendly Society; O.M. Green, Editor of the *North China Daily News* and a keen Mason, was Vice-President of both the Royal Society of St George and the Oxford and Cambridge Society; W.J.N.Dyer, President of the Swimming Bath Club, Councillor in the French Concession for 20 years and sometime Vice-President, Mason, sometime Volunteer fireman, member and later Commander of the Shanghai Light Horse died that year; R.Calder Marshall was Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce, Cathedral warden and on the Committee of the foreign YMCA. *NCH*, 1928, *passim*..

<sup>109</sup> Drage, *Taikoo*, p.223; Moneypenny Papers, “Ningpo More Far”, p.11.

<sup>110</sup> R. Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester, 1990), pp.89-90. “Thence to the gunboat for a drink...” wrote M.W. Scott of Swires in Yichang in 1935, “... Oh what boredom is expressed in those simple words,” Diary, 7/5/35, Scott papers.

It tested and taught them the basics of business. It also explains, partly, the marriage ban.<sup>111</sup>

They were usually based in large towns from which their tours of inspection of Chinese agencies were made.<sup>112</sup> Philips of the APC was first based in Wuzhou, with three other secular foreigners (just enough for bridge) who were shunned by the missionary community, and then at Nanning, an equally lonely posting.<sup>113</sup> Dobson, for BAT, worked firstly at Zhengzhou in 1936 with one colleague, a Belgian, a Scot and the inhabitants of a mission, then at Changsha with its 18 members of the Changsha Club.<sup>114</sup> John Logan at Shijiazhuang in 1930 described the foreign community as containing himself, his superior (an eccentric, “gone-native” English bachelor) and 15 Frenchmen, each with his concubine.<sup>115</sup>

The loneliness of this period could not but have made young newcomers more than anxious to fit in when they graduated to the larger communities.<sup>116</sup> Dobson admitted this - his early disdain for treaty port society was at first confirmed by British life in Hankou - but such disdain was replaced after his up country experiences with a great deal of affection.<sup>117</sup> The process would also have thrown them as much onto themselves as onto the companies they worked for.<sup>118</sup> Most expatriates working for foreign-based companies were also moved around the country frequently, thereby gaining them as much experience as possible. It also occurred as a result of promotion but was again useful for cementing their loyalty firmly towards the company itself and to the small and similarly peripatetic British communities in which they lived and through which they moved. For many missionaries too, based permanently “up-country”, this was an intensely lonely experience, especially, but not always, at the beginning. Confrontation with the novelty and unfamiliarity of place and language could never adequately be prepared for beforehand.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Cook, *Lion and the Dragon*, pp.35-48.

<sup>112</sup> For a brief explanation of these networks see Jürgen Osterhammel, “Imperialism in Transition: British Business and the Chinese Authorities, 1931-37”, *China Quarterly*, No.98 (June 1984), pp.270-71.

<sup>113</sup> J.M. Philips Papers, Letters to P.S. Jones, May 1925, 4/5/25.

<sup>114</sup> Dobson, *China Cycle*, pp.15-16.

<sup>115</sup> Logan, *China*, p.54.

<sup>116</sup> If they were still capable, J.M. Philips felt that “life up-country turns a man hard, cynical, and worst of all robs him of the art of talking nonsense which is the salt of life”, Letter to P.S. Jones, 14/1/26.

<sup>117</sup> Dobson, *China Cycle*, p.13, then *passim*.

<sup>118</sup> The political struggles cemented this, in August 1925 J.M. Philips reported the feeling of being with “A little knot of Britishers, living on that sort of communal sort of intimacy, so satisfactory, and yet so undefinable, that one only finds where a few men are drawn together against a set of circumstances that are threatening all alike”, J.M. Philips Papers, letter to P.S. Jones, 26/8/25. Midshipman Sims recorded leaving the lonely British Consul in Takao [Gaoxiong], Taiwan “with tears streaming down his face and waving frantically a Union Jack”, Sims Papers, Journal, 17/12/28.

<sup>119</sup> See, for example, H. Marsden to F.H. Hawkins 26/4/29 on the “utter loneliness” of being left alone as a couple in charge of Tingchow, LMS China Fukien Box 15; also Dr. George Dorling to F.H. Hawkins 26/10/29, LMS Box 26 North China; F.J. Griffith of the Church of England mission in Shandong did not see another European for eighteen months in 1915-6, Scott papers, Griffith to Miss Heathcote, 11/1/17.



Other Britons, missionaries apart, whose jobs were static, became fiercely loyal to, and protective of, their own communities. The smaller sites had their recognizable “Pooh-Bahs” - U.J. Kelly in Zhenjiang, for example: “Secretary of the Doric Lodge, Chief of Police, Fire Dept., Public Works Dept., Waterworks, Sanitation, Secretary of the British Municipal Council and of all the Clubs”,<sup>120</sup> Brian Power’s “Peebles” (probably Jardine’s E.C.P. Peters) in Tianjin was Chairman of the British Municipal Council and the General Chamber of Commerce, Lodge Master and President of the St Andrews Society.<sup>121</sup> Swire’s Shantou manager Hance ruled the roost in that port as other long-time residents did in theirs. It was obviously quite tempting, even Stella Benson’s husband got “a sort of tyranny complex sometimes in China, he gets spoilt and his little authority in this kind of port goes to his head.”<sup>122</sup> Consuls tended to fill this role in the smaller ports, although there was always an element of competition with the Customs Commissioner who, as a Chinese government official led the wider foreign community.

### **Missions and Missionaries**

Missionaries formed an identifiable sub-community which ultimately relied on their national status for protection, despite the stated policy of the CIM to forego it and of the Quakers to forgo the protection of force. Never the less the vulgar extraterritoriality of being European foreigners was as useful in relations with the Chinese as technical extraterritoriality.

They tended to live in small isolated groups, and occasionally alone, and stayed within these communities; their work required more long-term personal contact with a wider variety of Chinese people than that of the businessmen. Each society had its own district organisations in the areas it worked in and these held monthly, quarterly and annual meetings. “Itinerating”, or trekking out into the countryside either to unevangelised areas or to check on converted ones was the equivalent of the businessman’s “up-country” tour and no more comfortable.

Most businessmen paid public lip-service to the rightness of their enterprise but there was a great deal of hostility. Lord Inchcape caused a minor scandal by attacking missionaries at the 1926 annual general meeting of the Peninsular and Orient Company.<sup>123</sup> Rodney Gilbert disliked the results of the influence, they were blamed for creating the anti-Imperialist movements through their educational and Westernizing efforts which were destroying traditional Chinese society.<sup>124</sup> Evangelical Protestants from the United States were the main targets of this abuse, nationality playing an important

<sup>120</sup> Tinkler Papers, letter to Edith, 16/12/25.

<sup>121</sup> “The Pooh-Bah of Tientsin”, E.J. Nathan to P.C. Young, 23/3/25, E.J. Nathan Papers; Brian Power, *Ford of Heaven* (London, 1984), pp.44, 72, 150.

<sup>122</sup> Drage, *Taikoo*, p.273; Benson Diaries, 7/4/30.

<sup>123</sup> *The Times*, 9/12/26, p.24, 10/12/26, p.15.

<sup>124</sup> Gilbert, *What’s Wrong*, pp.295-98.

role as well. This seems to have been a mantra learned reasonably early in a businessman's career. "Very poor fish" wrote Philips, who elaborated later: "Unconvincing, jealous, bickering, bigoted, Pharisaical and, on the whole, unchristian." R.M. Tinkler was quite splenetic about "petty, arrogant, local missionaries."<sup>125</sup>

The teetotal, anti-smoking and pious rigidity of many protestant missionaries accounted for part of the social gulf. Philips announced that he and his fellow businessmen had been shunned by the local mission community. Miss J.M. Dixon resigned from the LMS in 1931 because of loneliness and the puritanical intolerance of colleagues who resented her independent attitudes and her golfing.<sup>126</sup>

The gulf was partly a matter of class. The claim that the LMS were "usually people who got jobs as office boys or clerks" in Britain was characteristic.<sup>127</sup> Missionaries were hardly free from this themselves. In 1929 the Rev. Taylor of the LMS was transferred away from China at the request of his colleagues, partly because of linguistic inabilities, but mostly because of failings cause by his "lack of early cultural environment", a class bias against a working class man from Plaistow, East London, for whom "Living with colleagues of an entirely different stamp must have been mutually exceedingly difficult."<sup>128</sup> The class divide was also a question of money. Young businessmen were by no means paid well, although the rewards of promotion could be high, but missions could ill afford to pay their workers anything excessive. Because of this missionaries generally travelled second-class on trains and ships in and to China for reasons of economy and thereby segregated themselves from other foreigners.

The dislike could be mutual if equally as predictable and ritualistic. Sewell was shocked by the behaviour of the foreign community in Shanghai towards Chinese; Marjorie Clements records the drunkenness and abusiveness of American train passengers; T. Biggin feared for the morals of young police recruits going out to China for the first time. The Reverend Hope Moncrieff vividly complained about business life: "the amount of money wasted on gambling, wine, cigars, horse and dog racing, and social vice, would meet the salary of most missionaries two or three times over."<sup>129</sup> Of course it was not always hostility of the type caricatured by Somerset Maugham in his story *God's Truth*. Bazalgette had quite a liking for the CIM workers whose old-fashioned, anti-modernist aggressive fundamentalist approach to Chinese society suited many foreigners

<sup>125</sup> J.M. Philips papers, letters to P.S. Jones, May 1925, 7/4/26; Tinkler Papers, letter to Aunt Florence, 9/7/21 also see his letter to Edith 26/6/25.

<sup>126</sup> Logan, *China*, pp.35; J.M. Phillips papers, letter to P.S. Jones, May 1925; J.M. Dixon to F.H. Hawkins 5/8/31, LMS South China Box 27.

<sup>127</sup> ST - 19, p.6.

<sup>128</sup> Miss W.I. Coxon to F.H. Hawkins, 10/12/29; Mabel Geller to F.H. Hawkins, 6/12/29, LMS Central China Box 44.

<sup>129</sup> W. Sewell, circular letters, 25/3/27, 1/6/27, 2/7/27, FSC CH/5/4; M. Clements, Letter to Mrs May, 23/9/33, LMS China Personal Box 13; T. Biggin "Report for Year 1928", LMS North China Reports Box 10; Rev Hope Moncrieff to P.J. Maclagan, 31/7/28, EPMA Fukien Box 19.

who shared their dislike of that society. In 1928 Bazalgette found a kindred spirit in an ex-Shanghai Municipal Policeman turned CIM who put down “the trouble to the foreign education of Chinese.”<sup>130</sup> Naval Chaplain W.F. Scott found a couple of CIM workers in Chongqing to his liking who were ready in late 1926 “to bear arms themselves if necessary” to protect their brethren. Scott claimed to be “utterly uncorrupted about Missionaries” but had come to think more of them after acquaintance in China.<sup>131</sup> Roman Catholic missionaries also tended to be admired for similar reasons, notably their success and, by inference, their doctrinal confidence.<sup>132</sup> Theirs was the “missionary muscularity” so approved of by the pro-Imperialists.<sup>133</sup>

Ultimately businessmen and others resorted to cliché. “We are all missionaries” declared Charles Addis at a London Missionary Conference in 1934 whilst O.M. Green lauded their “altruism”.<sup>134</sup> In return the head of the China Inland Mission was keen to point out that “the fact of our being missionaries does not make us less loyal Englishmen”.<sup>135</sup>

## **The Consequences of the Ghetto**

### **Isolation and Distrust**

The institutions of British treaty port society had certain features in common, the most important being their racial and to a lesser extent national exclusivity.<sup>136</sup> Chinese were barred from most clubs, most sports clubs, most Masonic Lodges and treaty port schools.<sup>137</sup> (Most national clubs admitted other Europeans or Americans.)<sup>138</sup> Concessions were made in the later 1920s; the Peking Jockey Club held separate meetings from the Chinese Nanyuan Club until 1928 but only the Hong Kong Jockey Club ever admitted Chinese members; whilst the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club had its first Chinese steward in 1929 and, although still far from enthusiastic about Chinese riders, in 1930 conceded the necessity of making “a serious effort to get Chinese gentleman riders”, which was a

<sup>130</sup> IOLR, Bazalgette, Letters, 23/7/27; 17/10/28. For Maugham see *On a Chinese Screen*, pp.90-93.

<sup>131</sup> W.F. Scott Papers, IWM, Letters to his sisters, 23/10/26; 28/1/27 p.27.

<sup>132</sup> Dobson, *China Cycle*, p.32; J.M. Philips Papers, letter to P.S. Jones, 7/4/26; Teichman, *Affairs of China*, pp.291-93.

<sup>133</sup> Mangan, *Games Ethic*, pp.168-75.

<sup>134</sup> Quoted in Roberta Dayer, *Capital and Empire: Sir Charles Addis, 1861-1945* (London, 1988), p.251; Green, *Foreigner in China*, p.90.

<sup>135</sup> Rev D. Hoste to Prideaux Brune, 20/1/28, FO670\220\56.

<sup>136</sup> Woodcock, *British in the Far East*, p.187-88; ST - 6, pp.44-45; ST - 22, p.6; Huebner, “Architecture on the Shanghai Bund”, p.142. It has been claimed that membership for Chinese of the foreign clubs in Shanghai was being considered in 1941, Arch Carey, *The War Years at Shanghai, 1941-45-48* (New York, 1967), p.163.

<sup>137</sup> ST - 6, p.44; Power describes the arrival of the first Chinese pupil to the British Gordon School in Tianjin in 1930, *Ford of Heaven*, p.147.

<sup>138</sup> “Ex-enemy nationals” were one exception, German candidates for admission to the Shanghai Cricket Club were not accepted until 1928, *NCH*, 9/6/28, p.426. The Japanese were generally excluded, Peattie, “Japanese Treaty Port Settlements”, pp.193-94.

concession to gentlemen at least.<sup>139</sup> There were the odd exceptions, Zhang Xueliang was allowed to join both the Hankow Recreation Club and the Peking Club, and ex-Emperor Puyi was granted membership of the Tianjin British Country Club as a “special Chinese”; the British usually capitulated to force or royalty.<sup>140</sup> As most of these clubs formed the limits of British society’s experience it was not surprising that “one lived amongst one’s own kind.”<sup>141</sup> In the main the other foreign communities also kept themselves separate to the Chinese, except professionally.<sup>142</sup> Those national clubs which were more cosmopolitan, such as the Cècle Sportif Française, were widely disliked by Britons for their “mixed and dubious” company.<sup>143</sup>

The only Chinese met by Britons, as by most other foreigners in China, were rickshaw pullers, servants, compradores and staff, and sometimes interpreters.<sup>144</sup> They were often “invisible”.<sup>145</sup> Missionaries had greater and closer contact but in the recriminations that followed the mass exodus of 1927 it became clear that this was sometimes more form than substance.<sup>146</sup> Captain Miner’s advice correctly indicated the true state of relations. Mixing was kept to formal occasions arranged by Compradores or Chinese managers.<sup>147</sup> This was usually dinner for business contacts or seasonal celebrations providing a ritual acknowledgment of fraternal relations when it was quite likely, for example, that Stella Benson’s neighbour Humphreys would be “drunk all day with holiday-making Chinese in order to uphold the prestige of the APC” a practice that the company “definitely encourages.”<sup>148</sup>

<sup>139</sup> The Beijing Inter-Club meeting was far from trouble free, a Chinese jockey whipped Lampson’s horse across the face, an incident he ignored in order not to disturb the spirit of the occasion, Lampson Diaries, 12-13/5/28; Coates, *China Races*, pp.173-74; the Hong Kong Flying Club also had a similar membership policy, G.O.C. China Command Hong Kong Intelligence Summary (20.11.29 - 25.12.29), 1/130, FO228/4307/1 83c; C. Noel Davis, *A History of the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club, 1863-1930* (Shanghai, 1930), p.35; Brenan to Lampson S/O, 30/10/30 and enclosures incl. N.L. Sparke to J.W. Robertson, undated [October 1930], FO228/4134/40 3.

<sup>140</sup> ST - 6, p.44; CET, 11/7/29, p.110; Power, *Ford of Heaven*, p.97. The Hankow Club’s European-only rules remained in force even for a Swire employee: “a member of Wellington Koo’s family... brought up entirely in England... more English in his outlook than Chinese... he accepted that those were the rules.” ST 6, p.45.

<sup>141</sup> ST - 3, p.18. In Tianjin in 1925-28 the Chinese town was out of bounds to Army Other Ranks, Robinson papers, Memoir, p.1.

<sup>142</sup> Huskey, “Americans in Shanghai”, pp.22-24; Kreissler, *L’action culturelle allemande en Chine*, p.13; Peattie, “Japanese Treaty Port Settlements”, pp.192-98.

<sup>143</sup> Gompertz, *China in Turmoil*, p.80.

<sup>144</sup> In his *Foreigner in China* the only Chinese personally described by O.M. Green were his servants, pp.127-34, Logan, *China*, p.17; see also Peattie, “Japanese Treaty Port Settlements”, p.187, on similarities in that community.

<sup>145</sup> Moneypenny papers, “Ningpo More Far”, p.31.

<sup>146</sup> On the missions see Chapter 6.

<sup>147</sup> ST - 10, p.17.

<sup>148</sup> See, for example, the description of the annual dinner given by the Guangzhou branch of BAT in *B.A.T. Bulletin*, April 1929, pp.324-25. Benson, Diaries, 31/1/30, 21/1/30. Philips describes as a successful formal dinner one where “the Pro-Consul, the Chinese Chief of Police and the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs started a competition for the best imitation of the noise of a bullfrog, before the fish had been cleared away”, J.M. Philips papers, Philips to P.S. Jones, 4/5/25.

Few seem to have regretted this state of affairs despite calls at the time for greater social intercourse to facilitate good relations and trade. "I think I was kept too busy to worry about whether I was missing anything with the Chinese", remembered one, but the evidence of Shanghai's reputation for socialising usually contradicts this.<sup>149</sup> A Union Club was formed in Shanghai in 1919 to provide Britons, Chinese and Americans with "a suitable centre where representative businessmen of China and the Occident might meet for friendly intercourse and discussion." Membership was low and usage nominal and formal, prompting the Club to move to new premises in late 1928 in an attempt to encourage more casual use by members. An International Recreation Club had been formed in 1908 but the membership here seems disproportionate.<sup>150</sup>

Although only a few articulated the situation in this way at the time, the assumptions, structures - even the vocabulary of British India (tiffin, lakh, shroff, godown, coolie, bund, boy, chit) - were carted to China.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore on the voyage out to China Britons would have passed through the Straits Settlements and Hong Kong where Chinese formed a part of the formal imperial subject population, on arrival in Shanghai or Hankou they would have found Sikhs employed in the British controlled police forces as a visible colonial affectation. The effect on their perceptions of the nature of their relationship with the Chinese in China must have been tangible. The impression this must have made on the Chinese should also be noted. As one Swire employee put it:

I am rather ashamed of the boycotts we had rather. They arose very largely from the way we treated the Chinese. It was perfectly natural and perfectly understandable and I think a relic of India rather, which had spread to China. And they got a bit impatient.<sup>152</sup>

Exceptions to this segregation were often to be found in the marginal British groups - the Sephardi Jews, Eurasians, or the British poor or criminal. Eurasian A.W.H. Grant's cabaret companions were mostly Chinese. S.M.P. Sergeant H.J. Connolly was dismissed from the force in 1931 after being charged, in collusion with four Chinese constables, with aiding and abetting a robbery. Shady boarding-house manager W.A. "Jerry" Morgan speculated in various business ventures with Chinese and Japanese friends.<sup>153</sup>

Language was a problem although the British had an advantage, as one Swire employee remembered:

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<sup>149</sup> ST - 5, Roll 3, p.11.

<sup>150</sup> V.G. Lyman, quoted in *NCH*, 31/3/28, p.534, "The Union Club of China"; The International Recreation Club's membership was 60% Chinese, 30% British and 10% Japanese, *NCH*, 31/3/28, p.526.

<sup>151</sup> ST - 5, p.2: "Having been in India I had an idea of what Eastern life was like". Lionel Curtis, felt that "The British... are badly handicapped by traditions established in their earlier contact with India...", "Notes on China", RIIA, Box 8, p.20.

<sup>152</sup> ST - 19, p.13.

<sup>153</sup> NARA SMP D514, 27/8/29; NARA SMP D6612, 28/3/38; NARA SMP D8268, 4/4/40.

In the main parts... every Chinese in the business world speaks English, perhaps not well enough for real interchange of ideas, but some do... in Chungking communication was restricted to just friendly noises about trade and trivia.<sup>154</sup>

Inability to communicate meant that most formal occasions were a trial for both nationalities. These problems forced communication either to be undertaken in pidgin-English, a language of domination between master and servant, which served as a vehicle for ridicule of the Chinese, or else to be reduced in English to these “friendly noises” between fellow businessmen.

Chinese still had to be learnt by young businessmen. It was not popular, and many Britons considered it a demeaning or deracinating exercise.<sup>155</sup> Classes provided at various British Chamber of Commerce Language Schools were usually under-subscribed despite the financial incentives and exhortations of commercial bodies and trade reports.<sup>156</sup> The standard practice of moving men around the country militated against their spending their time learning a dialect unintelligible elsewhere in China. Furthermore most companies expected staff to study outside office hours, but these were quite elastic in China and there were frequent complaints that men worked too hard to study fruitfully afterwards, or learn on the job. Six years after it was founded, the School of Oriental Studies still felt it was failing “to receive that encouragement from Business firms which the position of the School in the heart of the city might have led us to hope for.” In 1923/4 there were 32 “commercial” students, in 1924/5 29 and in the following year only 14. Only in 1928 did the school feel that it was beginning to get reasonable support. In 1929 BAT sent 6 students for an intensive 3 month course and in the year 1929/30 there were 100 part-time and occasional commercial students, the largest number in the inter-war years. Depression, followed by war put an end to this upward climb.<sup>157</sup> It is doubtful if there was ever much improvement in this area.

The refusal to mix was apparently reciprocated:

At that time the only people who really one had very much to do with were the sort of lower order of clerks who were almost as unwilling to associate with you.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> ST - 13, p.27. English was so dominant that even the treaty port German businessman’s language was heavily affected in diction and vocabulary, Kreissler, *L’action culturelle allemande en chine*, p.20.

<sup>155</sup> Fitzgerald, *Why China?*, p.34.

<sup>156</sup> On the financial inducements see, for example, Gordon Campbell, “Recollections of Some Aspects of Earning a Living in China Between the Wars”, unpublished mss., pp.2-3; *Report of the Committee of the Hankow British Chamber of Commerce for the year ending 31st December 1928 and Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Members*, in Hankow No.75, 28/7/28, FO228\3929\1 124d; *Report of the Committee of the British Chamber of Commerce Hankou 1929*, in Lampson to FO, 19/6/29, FO228\4109\1 124e. See also, for example, the report of the Shanghai AGM for 1929. *NCH*, 20/4/29, pp.106-107, and the report on language schools in *Trade and Economic Conditions in China 1931-33*, Louis Beale and G. Clinton Pelham, Department of Overseas Trade, London 1933.

<sup>157</sup> School of Oriental Studies, *Reports of the Governing Body and Statement of Accounts 1917 to 1940*; CHAS S.I. 3 China Association School of Practical Chinese, “Report on Chinese Class at School of Oriental Studies 1926”.

<sup>158</sup> ST - 3, p.18.

Such remembered reciprocation may also be post-facto justification.<sup>159</sup> The unwillingness was possibly related to the existing imbalance in relations and the unwillingness of Chinese to accept the self-ascribed higher status of British colleagues for, as one resident remarked, “Everybody liked the Chinese, provided they did what was expected of them.”<sup>160</sup>

The situation is acknowledged to have changed by and after the Second World War (“We got quite close to them, I think, between the Wars, We did know they existed anyway”<sup>161</sup>) and there were some exceptions made to Westernized Chinese although they were usually avoided because of that very Westernization.

Isolation and the inability and unwillingness to communicate fuelled distrust. This exacerbated the suspicious attitudes towards the Chinese which were taught by the models of Chinese characteristics. The limitation of contacts with the Chinese in general to the Chinese poor - who had a vested interest in dishonesty - was partly the source of the British obsession with Chinese dishonesty. Memoirs and recollections abound with tales of “squeeze” by household servants and corruption in public life and business.<sup>162</sup>

Chinese society in general, of course, was able to function quite autonomously of the small foreign communities it played host to. This lack of social intercourse applies largely to British and Chinese groups with mutual or shared business or other interests, who worked together or competed. In Shanghai, Tianjin, Hankou, in fact in all the treaty ports, courtesy and pragmatism suggested that closer relations were a necessity. As chapters four and five will show, the events of the years 1925 to 1927 and the assumption of power by the *Guomindang* exposed this need even more forcefully.

### **Communal Loyalty and Communal Power**

There were other expressions of communal loyalty. The formal requirement of British subjects to register annually with the British Consul became a ritual of accession to the community.<sup>163</sup> The relationship between the British and their consuls could at times be “rather like undergraduates and Proctors at Oxford. It was amazing how they stood up for it.”<sup>164</sup> Protection could be withdrawn and unregistered subjects, who were not entitled to Consular Protection, were deemed to be “unrecognized”.

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<sup>159</sup> Carey, *War Years at Shanghai*, pp.161-63.

<sup>160</sup> ST - 8, p.35.

<sup>161</sup> ST - 19, p.27; see also ST - 16, p.35.

<sup>162</sup> See, for example, Cook, *Lion and the Dragon*, pp.56-58, 116-17.

<sup>163</sup> “The China (Amendment) Order in Council, 1921”, *The Directory and Chronicle of China, Japan*, 1932, pp.139-40. Defaulters were fined, *Oriental Affairs*, January 1937, p.39.

<sup>164</sup> ST - 19, p.21; There could be exceptions: “Whenever the Consul says anything now-a-days it is the immediate signal for certain types of people to do the opposite on the general grounds that it is the Christian thing not to be in subjection to the powers that be”, H.B. Rattenbury to A.W. Hooker, 10/6/30, WMSA Hupeh fiche 402.

Consuls took a wider lead in the communities too, there were Honorary Presidencies of the British Chambers of Commerce,<sup>165</sup> whilst Sir Sydney Barton in Shanghai was President of the Boy Scouts Association (Shanghai Branch) and the Shanghai Horticultural Society, among others. There were national celebrations to preside over and troops to review.

British patriotism in China, as in most expatriate colonies, was rather exaggerated:

After the Parade foreigners and everyone adjourned to the Consulate where we drank the King's Health after the Consul had made an excellent Imperialistic speech, this part of the programme finished off by singing God Save the King - a thing one would look on as somewhat theatrical if done at Home, but then an Englishman has got to go abroad before he realises what the King stands for and means to him personally.<sup>166</sup>

The annual King's birthday celebrations in Shanghai were an impressive display of national sentiment and military force as was the case for the other large foreign communities on their national days.<sup>167</sup> In 1928 3,000 troops and SVC members paraded, a 21 Gun Salute was fired, every 7 shots being interrupted by a rifle fusillade from the SVC and the singing of a verse of the National Anthem.<sup>168</sup> Such rituals were conducted on Armistice Sunday (some companies had their own ceremonies<sup>169</sup>), St George's (Patrick's, Andrew's and David's) Day and usually involved Cenotaph Ceremonies, Church Services, March Pasts, receptions, dinners and balls. Most of the communities had a cenotaph, or at least a war memorial.<sup>170</sup> Empire day was also celebrated, although this was usually, but not uniquely, aimed at the children.<sup>171</sup>

One memoir of Tianjin revolves around parades and march pasts.<sup>172</sup> The marching through the settlement of army units as they left or arrived at Shanghai and Tianjin became a regular feature of life there, especially, but not only, during times of crisis.<sup>173</sup> The Volunteer forces were prominent in these public displays. The annual inspection and the annual Church Parade of the SVC in Shanghai involved route marches through the

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<sup>165</sup> In fact the Legation and the Consular Establishments had been instrumental in setting these up during the Great War to attack German trade, *BCCJ*, April 1930, pp.79-81.

<sup>166</sup> Hamilton papers, Journal, 3/6/27 (Jiujiang); *NCH*, 12/5/28, p.211.

<sup>167</sup> Huskey, "Americans in Shanghai", pp.19-21; Peattie, "Japanese Treaty Port Settlements", p.194.

<sup>168</sup> *NCH*, 9/6/28, pp.426-27.

<sup>169</sup> Such as Jardines, *NCH*, 17/11/28, p.253.

<sup>170</sup> A photograph of Fuzhou's, with its 8 names, can be found in the Dodwell papers in Guildhall Mss., 27,523/3.

<sup>171</sup> In Shanghai in 1928 this involved a Scout parade at the British Consulate and inspection by the Consul General. *NCH*, 26/5/28, p.334; in Ningbo and Hankou there were sports events, *ibid.*, 2/6/28, pp.367, 371. On the wider Empire Day movement see Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp.231-36.

<sup>172</sup> Power, *Ford of Heaven*, pp.41-42, 167-70.

<sup>173</sup> "Ever since the early days of last year nothing has enthralled Shanghai more than the march through the settlement of the battalions of the Defence Force", *NCH*, 7/7/28, p.13.



Settlement whilst Corps members were usually given ostentatious funerals with full military honours. The Police Specials also did their share of marching.<sup>174</sup>

These were public shows of British and communal confidence for the benefit both of the participants and surely also as a reminder to the Chinese in the settlement of where effective military power lay. In the charged atmosphere of May 1927 one naval commander paraded his troops in Jiujiang as a deliberate provocation.<sup>175</sup> The spectacle of armed British merchants on the march could hardly have appeased those Chinese who doubted British protestations of fraternity and desires only for mutually beneficial trade.<sup>176</sup> It also arguably contributed to the aggressive insularity of the British community itself and encouraged the “imperial tendency” and the strains of paramilitarism, which barely lay beneath the SVC and SMP uniforms, and the belief in seeking solutions through action, as opposed to diplomacy. For example, British civilians not under SVC control took an active part in the fighting that took place in Shanghai in the days after May 30th 1925.<sup>177</sup> This was also manifested in various short-lived “anti-Communist” organisations such as the Constitutional Defence League (1925-28), the Shanghai Fascisti (1927-28), whose immediate programme included the formation of units to help the SMC defend the Settlement, the anti-communist Entente (1928), and later by the BRA.<sup>178</sup> More important expressions can be seen in more informal groupings<sup>179</sup> and in the evidence of private attitudes.<sup>180</sup>

On Empire Day in 1928 at the Shanghai Club Sydney Barton declared that he hoped that “the spirit which animated our Empire had not been wholly absent from the representatives of the Empire’s people who lived here.” Empire was present in more than spirit, as Barton continued:

In Shanghai, though outside the bounds of the Empire, we had concrete evidence of the privileges of citizenship in the Empire in the presence of

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<sup>174</sup> *NCH*, 21/4/29, p.104, “SVC Magnificent Parade”; 5/5/28, p.241; 14/7/28, p.61; 22/12/28, p.485, “The Shanghai Volunteers Route March”.

<sup>175</sup> Hamilton papers, Journal 13/5/27; Interestingly, whilst en route to Shanghai some of the SDF had been asked by the authorities in Singapore to march through the Chinese Quarter after trouble there. This can hardly have helped instil any respect for Chinese sovereignty amongst the force, Hamilton papers, Letter to Mother 6/4/27. Bazalgette similarly marched in Penang (“not a chink was seen for days”) and Hong Kong, IOLR, Bazalgette papers, Letters to parents, 6/2/27, 13/2/27.

<sup>176</sup> It was the Hankou Volunteers who shot dead 8 Chinese demonstrators in June 1925, *Annual Report of the Hankow British Municipal Council*, 1926, Hankow No.30, 15/3/26, FO228\3187\105 26.

<sup>177</sup> *NCDN*, 3/6/25, p.11. The same thing happened in Hankou, J.E. March, memoir, IWM 89/21/1, p.71.

<sup>178</sup> *NCH*, 21/7/28, p.104, 14/1/28, p.53, 28/6/28, p.518.

<sup>179</sup> “There are a lot of Bolsheviks and Socialists in England and Scotland who are likely to be shot when some of the fellows come back from China”, Tinkler papers, Letter to Edith 28/3/27. War experience must have contributed to this bellicosity.

<sup>180</sup> “I’m convinced that the best thing for this place, the Yangtse and China generally is to goad these swine into making trouble and force the hands of the sentimentalists at home” Hamilton papers, Journal 11/5/27. SDF Intelligence Officer, later Brigadier, Field’s “Memoir” (IWM Field papers) includes a description of his arrangement of the assassination of a Communist suspect, p.7.

His Majesty's naval and military forces, who had come from many corners of the Empire for the protection of this community.<sup>181</sup>

Others were aware of an imperial role. Frederick Maze, Inspector-General of the Maritime Customs felt in 1930 that he was playing "a 'lone hand' in what may be described as an 'Outpost of Empire.'" "The Flag at Chinkiang" was how the *North China Herald* chose to announce the reopening of the Consulate there in 1928, emotionally emphasising the patriotic and imperial element.<sup>182</sup>

### The Exclusion of Transgressors

This insularity led the British community to close ranks against perceived transgressors of its rules. "the community usually cured them, but if it didn't it broke them", remembered Gompertz, a Jardine's employee.<sup>183</sup> Sir Frederick Maze was the target of one particular communal exclusion during the struggle for control of the CMC. He was expelled from the Shanghai Bowling Club and later vilified in the press for swearing an oath of loyalty to the *Guomindang* and *Sanminzhuyi*.<sup>184</sup> Another Customs official, Colonel Hayley-Bell, was "cut in the streets - in the clubs all turned their backs on him and his daughters" over his mishandling of the 1930 Tianjin customs dispute.<sup>185</sup> This was not specifically a British trait but the British made a greater virtue of national solidarity and prestige (especially in criminal cases) than other national groups in China professed to.<sup>186</sup> This sensitivity led to individuals who were not in favour of "gunboat" policies to be accused of being "pro-Chinese". The application of this term in particular was indicative of the community's insularity and hostility to the Chinese community.<sup>187</sup>

### Communal Legends

The treaty port communities required, as all communities do, legends to bolster their technical legitimacy and define themselves. These legends were passed on to new arrivals as justifications, both of their presence in China and of their right to stay.

<sup>181</sup> *NCH*, 2/2/29, p.104; 26/5/28, p.334.

<sup>182</sup> Maze to A.J. Toynbee, 6/1/30, Maze papers, Confidential Letters, Vol.3; *NCH*, 8/9/28, p.403.

<sup>183</sup> Gompertz, *China in Turmoil*, p.54.

<sup>184</sup> Maze to C.H. Tenant, 6/6/29, Maze papers, Confidential Letters, Vol.3; *NCH*, 12/1/29, pp.45-46, 53.

<sup>185</sup> Benson Diaries, 7/7/30.

<sup>186</sup> Allman, *Shanghai Lawyer*, pp.98-99. The most prominent American exception was J.B. Powell, editor of the *China Weekly Review*, who was forced out of the American Chamber of Commerce in 1927 because of the magazine's liberal political stance towards China, Huskey, "Americans in Shanghai", pp.133-35. In Shanghai Mauro Fresco, Mexican Honorary Consul and author of the pseudonymous *Shanghai: Paradise of Adventures*, felt it necessary to flee the city when his authorship became known, and other sensationalist reportages were attacked in the treaty port press. On Fresco ("Lee Miller") see NARA SMP D3307; a review of Champly's *The Road to Shanghai* was accorded an SMP Special Branch file, NARA SMP D6601. In Macao, C.A. Montalto de Jesus was pilloried and run out of town after the publication of the second, controversial, edition of his *Historic Macao* in 1926, Introduction, C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao* (Hong Kong, 1984), pp.viii-ix.

<sup>187</sup> Such as the Consul, Sir Meyrick Hewlett, Hewlett, *Forty Years*, pp.169-70, 180; Bailie-Grohman papers, GRO/7, letter to Layton, 18/12/31.

Principal among these was what can only be described as “mudflat-ism”, that is the common belief that the treaty ports and Concessions had been mud flats or marshes before the arrival of the Europeans. This was usually technically true but the implied and frequently explicit gloss was that the Europeans had been solely responsible for constructing the successful ports and industries, and usually this was felt to be more than just their providing safe and secure havens for the Chinese in which to trade.<sup>188</sup>

The Boxer rising provided another unifying legend, more grounded in reality and more important to the missionary community with its long professional interest in persecution and martyrdom. Many of the participants were still alive in the late 1920s. In 1926 Drage was entertained at dinner by Hewlett’s account of the Legation Siege whilst one young banker was often told similar first-hand stories in 1929. The treaty port press kept memories active.<sup>189</sup> For others nationalism was “boxerism” (heightened, fanatical, almost insane, mass anti-foreignism), especially when it was allied with anti-Christian movements. In early 1925 Simms recorded in his journal that: “The trouble at Shanghai gets worse every day... There are other serious things as well; such as anti-foreign risings in Hankow. It looks well as if there might be another Boxer rising.”<sup>190</sup> The organisation of underground communist movements also struck some observers as being as secretive and fanatical as the Boxers were supposed to have been. This refusal or inability to see the political dimensions of events and the perception of them as archetypes meant that many Britons in China failed to understand the nature of events after 1925. A modernised version of the Boxer “outrages” may be seen in the reaction to, and the totemic use of, the Nanjing Incident in 1927.<sup>191</sup> It also arose during the publicity generated by the Thorburn case:

Are there any indications that these ancient people warped by centuries of custom and prejudice have in less than a generation changed their hearts, have they become more civilised or milder in their disposition?

asked the proposer of a motion at a public meeting of British residents in Tianjin which was called to censure the Legation for inactivity over the matter.<sup>192</sup>

Within the British communities there were other unifying legends. Curiously enough the Britons lionized in China were not the Jardines, Dents, Keswicks or Swires,

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<sup>188</sup> *NCH*, 3/3/28, p.336; F.L. Hawks Pott *A Short History of Shanghai: Being an Account of the Growth and Development of the International Settlement* (Shanghai, 1928), p.1; Gilbert, *What’s Wrong*, p.291; Soothill, *China and England*, pp.61-85; *Directory and Chronicle of China and Japan*, 1932, p.858; d’Auxion De Ruffé, *Is China Mad?*, pp.259-60; *Notes on Shanghai*, pp.6, 16.

<sup>189</sup> B.C. Allan, Narrative, 11/5/63, HSB S16.1 Personal Narratives; on the press see, for example, the articles on “British Memorials in Peking” in *NCDN*, 13/8/27, p.11; *ibid.*, 15/8/27, p.7.

<sup>190</sup> Simms papers, Journal, 17/1/25, see also 2/6/25. B.L. Simpson (“Putnam Weale”) put forward this connection in his *Why China Sees Red*, p.29.

<sup>191</sup> *China in Chaos*, p.1; see also Rodney Gilbert in *NCH*, 16/4/27, p.114. Drage papers, Journal 24/9/24. For an example of Nanjing’s mythologisation see Nora Waln, *Within the Walls of Nanking* (London, 1928).

<sup>192</sup> Mr Dickinson, *Tientsin British Committee of Information*, Memorandum 31, 29/9/31, “The Tientsin Resolution”, RIIA, Box 10.

whose activities had established the British in China, but the imperialists such as General Gordon (after whom the headquarters of the Tientsin British Municipal Council was named), Sir Harry Parkes and Robert Hart, both of whose statues stood on the Shanghai Bund. These business communities then saw their forebears then not as men of trade but as men of war and Empire, not as men who cooperated with the Chinese but as men who fought them, advised them, saved them and organized them in such a way as benefited the foreign powers. Key events in this history were the “Battle of the Muddy Flats”, which marked the foundation of the SVC, and the Boxer battles.<sup>193</sup> The Wanxian Incident, for example, was immediately portrayed by the treaty port press as a British military victory solidly within this tradition of imperial military history.<sup>194</sup> These beliefs had practical consequences. They provided rationales for attacks on British government policy and the activities of British officials in China.<sup>195</sup> The British Empire’s heroic myths were in fact “primarily military” and these local variants emphasized the imperial nature, and by implication importance, of the British presence in China.<sup>196</sup>

These historical, and instantly-historical, legends were reinforced by histories of the foreign presence written by treaty port residents and by fictions such as those by Bennett, Graham, Hobart and Lenox Simpson. When, for example, the editor of the *Peking and Tientsin Times* was evacuated from occupied China in 1942 he spent the voyage writing “a book about the historic role, and the final passing, of the treaty ports, in the form of a historical novel.”<sup>197</sup>

The myth of quick money and easy living in China was still strong. Certainly a lot of fortunes were made in China and the obituarists and leader writers on the *North China Daily News* never let people forget this. “Rags to riches” stories were the stuff of the

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<sup>193</sup> Green, *Foreigner in China*, pp.111-26; Rasmussen, *Tientsin*, pp.113-27; C.A. Montalto de Jesus’ *Historic Shanghai* (Shanghai, 1909), is dedicated to Gordon; F. Maze’s papers are replete with his idolisation of Hart, Maze papers, *passim*.; see also his subordinate S. Wright’s *Hart and the Chinese Customs* (Belfast, 1950), esp. pp.xiii-xv. An exception is the work officially sponsored by the SMC, G. Lanning and S. Couling, *The History of Shanghai, Part 1* (Shanghai, 1921), pp.459-71, The Gordon industry was still in action in 1933 when B.M. Allen’s *Gordon in China* was published in London recounting: “one of the most dramatic pages in English history, while the cruel cunning of his Chinese colleagues serves to bring out the unselfish heroism of the young English commander”, p.vi. On the role played by the formation of the SVC and the Battle of Muddy Flat in Shanghai mythology see, for example, Pott, *Short History of Shanghai*, pp.26-30.

<sup>194</sup> *The Wanhsien Epic*, reprinted from the *Central China Post* (Hankou, 1926), “the account of a very courageous attempt on the part of a mere handful of men to rescue their fellow-countrymen and uphold the honour of the flag,” enclosure, in China Letter 1129/1041/417, 17/9/26, ADM116\2497.

<sup>195</sup> “Our diplomats of the Victorian era were of a different mettle,” wrote “British Trader” in the *NCDN*, 15/8/27, p.4.

<sup>196</sup> John M. Mackenzie, “Heroic Myths of Empire”, John M. Mackenzie, ed., *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester, 1992), pp.113, 134.

<sup>197</sup> Pennell, *Life Time with the Chinese*, p.270. The “chief stimulus” of C.A. Middleton-Smith, author of *The British in China and Far Eastern trade* (London, 1920), was “the desire to record some of the facts which I want my three boys, now at school in England, to appreciate” (p.v).

legends by which the foreign community characterized itself.<sup>198</sup> This was also mixed up with the advantages of outport living and the sense of isolation and racial threats. For Tinkler, Zhenjiang in 1925 was:

(like Foochow) a glimpse of the “good old China” of the earlier White men, when lavish... hospitality was the keynote of everything. In olden days in ports like this the foreigner did very little work... made money easily and spent it easily.<sup>199</sup>

This had a diminishing basis in reality, (there were 85 unemployed Britons searching for work in August 1932) but it influenced the behaviour and motivations of ordinary people.<sup>200</sup>

Modern legends continued to be made: it was claimed that the Foreign Office had betrayed the treaty port British, especially over the seizure of Hankou; mission educationalists had “bolshevised” China’s students; the Nanjing incident was described as a planned Nationalist trial for the attack on Shanghai, lurid rumours of the mass-rape of European women circulated. These legends had the function of uniting the community against hostile outsiders, or those it felt endangered it: Whitehall, foreign liberals, the *Guomindang*, and especially against the Chinese in general. They also represented a convenient simplification of recent political history for new arrivals to learn. It is clear that they did so.<sup>201</sup>

### Communal Protection

As we have seen from earlier sections the British in China had every intention of staying British. Theirs was not migration requiring assimilation but expatriate trading. Their children were educated to be British, not cosmopolitan. Butterfield and Swire’s London managers threatened, for example, to withdraw funding from the British School in Hankou if it was at all American influenced.<sup>202</sup> Children were either sent “home” for their education or to schools in the treaty ports, some of which, such as the Cathedral Schools for Boys and Girls in Shanghai, barred non-British children. At Gordon School in Tianjin Brian Power remembered that “the walls were hung with pictures of English scenes” and portraits of the King and Queen. The aim of the school was to give its pupils knowledge of the “British way of life.” There was a recognised absence of education

<sup>198</sup> “A Great Romance of Shanghai: Death of a Resident who once Slept on the Bund and Who Gave £50,000 to a Museum”, *NCH*, 21/4/28, p.104.

<sup>199</sup> Tinkler papers, Letter to Edith 16/12/25. Sir Erich Teichman described treaty port life as “cheap and easy living, with the good natured and industrious Chinese always at beck and call”, *Affairs of China*, pp.138-39; 282.

<sup>200</sup> *NCH*, 3/8/32, pp.165, 178.

<sup>201</sup> 201 See Bland on the “Foreign Office School of Thought”, *China*, pp.176-97. For a contemporary attempt at debunking the Nanjing rape-myths see *CWR*, 28/5/27, p.342.

<sup>202</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 21/9/28, JSS II 2/7. For an account of the ultra-patriotic British education inadvertently enjoyed by the children of the Soviet Ambassador in Beijing see Fitzgerald, *Why China?*, pp.71-72.

about their host country in British schools in China, and of the Chinese and their languages, so little in fact that one critic saw the lack as a source of “race” antipathy.<sup>203</sup> The CIM’s Chefoo School also did not teach the Chinese language, nor did it encourage its pupils to maintain the Chinese most of them spoke upon arrival at the school.<sup>204</sup>

Empire day was celebrated with sports and Scout parades. The Scouts held an annual camp in Shanghai and had been made use of during the crisis of early 1927 in Shanghai. The Boys Cathedral School had an Officer Training Corps which sometimes marched with the SVC. The annual round of ceremonies, celebratory days and marches was important for the children too. These were the socialising methods common in Britain and more important in China if children were going to maintain, or acquire, a British identity. So important were they that Power remembered being taught nothing about China at school.<sup>205</sup>

### Censorship

Censorship, especially in Shanghai, was another important factor in both protecting the solidarity of the foreign community and “white” prestige where it was possible. Cinema censorship was introduced in the International Concession in October Shanghai in 1927. This was, initially, partly to prevent outbursts of violent national chauvinism directed against films felt to be anti-French or anti-Italian.<sup>206</sup> More importantly censorship policy was constructed with the Chinese in mind and was felt to correspond in general to that of Hong Kong. There, films discrediting “white” women or else “showing the white man in a degrading or villainous light”, portraying mixed-race marriage, conflict between the Chinese and “the white man”, and bolshevist or mob violence were banned.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Power, *Ford of Heaven*, p.142-43; Mark J. Gayn, *Journey From the East* (New York, 1944), pp.132-33; for criticisms see “General Knowledge of China”, *Oriental Affairs*, January 1935, pp.26-27; Marguerite Ann Stewart, “Race Antipathies and Children’s Education”, *China Critic*, 31/7/30, pp.729-31.

<sup>204</sup> Personal information from Dr. Paul Thompson, a former pupil. For an erratic history of the Cheefoo (Yantai) school see Sheila Miller, *Pigtails, Petticoats and the Old School Tie* (Sevenoaks, 1981).

<sup>205</sup> *NCH*, 11/2/28, p.226; 19/5/28, p.241; Power, *Ford of Heaven*, p.149-50; Carey, *War Years at Shanghai*, p.157; *NCH*, 26/5/28, p.334; on Empire Day see Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp.232-36; see also Anne Boomfield, “Drill and Dance as Symbols of Imperialism”, Mangan, ed., *Making Imperial Mentalities*, pp.74-95; Power, *Ford of Heaven*, pp.142-46.

<sup>206</sup> *NCH*, 24/12/27, p.533. In 1930 film censorship was taken over by S.3. of the SMP Special Branch, “Special Branch Reorganisation Circular No.4: Duties of Special Branch No.3”, 1/7/30, NARA SMP D8/7. For a sample list of the films censored see Harley, *World-Wide Influences of the Cinema*, pp.110-114.

<sup>207</sup> E.S. Cunningham [US Consul-General Shanghai] to R.C. Tredwell [US Consul-General Hong Kong], 3/3/28; Tredwell to Cunningham, 23/2/28 enclosing Tredwell to Messrs. Krisel and Krisel, Shanghai, 23/2/28. Tredwell was quoting Hong Kong’s Captain Superintendent of Police, NARA RG 84 Shanghai Post Files 1928 840.6 (b). In Tianjin’s British Concession there was no censorship whilst in most other concessions it would not have been possible, Vice-Consul G.R. Paschal, Jnr., “Motion Picture Theatres in the Tientsin Consular District and the Marketing of American Films Therein”, NARA RG 84 Shanghai Post Files, 1929 840.6 (a).

A similar set of priorities in Shanghai governed censorship of books and photographs. “Indecent” publications, especially those featuring European women, communist, and later anti-Japanese material, were the targets of the efforts of the SMP’s Special Branch S.5..<sup>208</sup> These activities were directed against English-language material as well, mirroring the targets of censorship in Britain itself. It is clear, however, that the greater worry was the Chinese market, especially salacious works portraying Europeans.<sup>209</sup>

### At Home

At the other end of their lives, and on the other side of the world, the China British kept their sense of identity and loyalty. A hundredth anniversary dinner of the SVC was later held in Hong Kong in 1954 whilst an annual dinner for Shanghai-born British is still held. Memoir writing seems to have been an addictive and self-important habit, perhaps to counter the fact that, as some complained, nobody was really interested in China.<sup>210</sup> Given the quality of most of the memoirs, usually bland and eulogistic, this is not surprising. The Thatched House Club in London was informally their Club, especially on Wednesdays, and there, and through the China Association and other groups, many of them kept up active interests in their old communities. G.E. Hubbard, political agent of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, and his wife, for example, hosted an annual dinner in London for “Peking folk”.<sup>211</sup> In 1928 a committee of four ex-Councillors was formed in Britain to combat and correct adverse press reports about treaty port China and especially Shanghai.<sup>212</sup>

The importance of Britishness in China comes across forcefully in memoirs and transcripts through the very absence of the Chinese. The names of servants and compradores were, unless idealised, forgotten. Such dehumanising designations as “boy”, “amah” and “coolie” aided this.<sup>213</sup> Political events in China were also forgotten whereas

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<sup>208</sup> “Special Branch Reorganisation Circular No.4: Duties of Special Branch No.5”, 23/6/30, NARA SMP D8/7. For an example of their work see the file concerned with action taken against the public display of German advertising photographs of nude women in 1934, “Action taken regarding photographs of Nude Women Exhibited Locally”, 10/4/34, NARA SMP D5402.

<sup>209</sup> For the foreign material that interested them see “Radical and indecent books on sale in Settlement bookstores”, 11/3/31, NARA SMP D1964/1; by 1940 D.H. Lawrence was particular target and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* was deemed “unfit for public sale”, “Modern Book Co. Fall Catalogue 1940,” 4/9/40, NARA SMP file N374. For the type of Chinese material that interested them see, for example, the story of a foreigner’s visit to a “guide agency” in the mosquito paper *Danxing huabao*, in NARA SMP N1366 or the extracts from the novel “The Door of Soul and Flesh” in NARA SMP D2344.

<sup>210</sup> ST - 4, pp.12, 19; ST - 16, p.40.

<sup>211</sup> *NCH*, 6/10/28, p.23. As the depression hit home in Britain the Thatched House Club advertised 100 free admissions through the letters page of the *North China Daily News*, *NCH*, 5/4/31, p.30; W.J. Oudendyk, *Ways and By ways in Diplomacy* (London, 1939), p.24.

<sup>212</sup> *NCH*, 25/2/28, p.294; 9/6/28, p.396.

<sup>213</sup> ST - 18, p.16; ST - 3, p.7; ST - 6, pp.9, 33.

details of shooting, partying, practical jokes and other aspects of British communal life abound.<sup>214</sup>

### **Class Taboos**

As in Britain class-awareness was accepted and acceptable if publicly impolite.<sup>215</sup> Being mostly businessmen and without a governing civil service to snub them as in the Empire there was a degree of meritocracy.<sup>216</sup> There was an obvious and observed hierarchy amongst the foreign community. This was an amalgam of class and race bias, in Shanghai: “the truly international area known as Hongkew, [was] considered very low on the social scale”.<sup>217</sup> In the nineteenth century consular registration fees were fixed at two levels, one for “gentlemen” and one for “artisans” (poorer Indians paid a lower rate after 1908).<sup>218</sup>

A.H. Rasmussen wrote of “a reality that none could escape” and later found it “hard to conceive of a bigger change than that of an outdoor staff man in the Customs suddenly finding himself in the merchant class.” C.E. Temlett remembered being cut dead in mid-dance when his partner learnt that he was a Customs outdoorman (“the dead end boys”). The membership roll of the Tientsin Union Lodge makes it quite clear that this was a lodge for the petit-bourgeois, army NCO’s and suchlike. This was quite usual, there were two clubs in Zhenjiang earlier in the century, one for the outdoor Customs staff and one for the Consul, the Indoor staff and the merchants. The Shanghai Club was the elite club. The Shanghai Light Horse was the elite unit of the SVC which in had a membership application procedure akin to a social club.<sup>219</sup>

The social status of a British businessman in China was probably greater in China than it would have been at home. Theirs was a middle and upper-middle class community with that imperial aspect to its work that made it feel that business was socially acceptable. Some were not convinced, Stella Benson considered them “converted kitchenmaids and promoted commercial travellers” whilst the Navy never seems to have been happy with them in general terms.<sup>220</sup> The prospect of committing himself to a career

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<sup>214</sup> Moneypenny papers, “Ningpo More Far”, p.18.

<sup>215</sup> A. Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930* (2nd edition, London, 1990), p.85.

<sup>216</sup> Allen, *Plain Tales*, pp.82-90.

<sup>217</sup> E.M.C. Barraclough papers IWM Barraclough papers, “I was Sailing; An Old Sailor Remembers”, Unpublished mss., p.2.

<sup>218</sup> *NCH*, 11/1/33, p.47; G.E.P. Hertslet and Edward Parkes, eds., *Hertslet’s Treaties*, Volume 2, (London, 1908), p.1120.

<sup>219</sup> Rasmussen, *China Trader*, pp.5, 75; BBC, *Lion and the Dragon*, C.E. Temlett, Tape Roll 58/1, p.3; Sims, *Story of Union Lodge*, Appendix “A” “Chronological List of Members”; *NCH*, 7/7/28, p.19; J.E. March was “introduced” to the Light Horse by his business partners on arrival in Shanghai, memoir, p.94, March papers, IWM 89/21/1.

<sup>220</sup> Benson Diaries, 21/2/30; Hamilton papers, Journal 4/10/27.



in China surrounded by men he considered socially inferior caused Graham Greene to resign from BAT shortly before he was due to sail East.<sup>221</sup>

The tenuousness of this social status - especially among lower-middle class Britons in regard to the Chinese - was seen by some as a cause of the perceptibly high level of racist aggression: "they take it out of the Chinese so as to make themselves feel big" claimed William Sewell. As he admitted, most of the Chinese that the British community came into contact with were lower class - servants, clerks, rickshaw men and coolies.<sup>222</sup> Those that were met at business or official functions - Compradores, merchants - were rarely socialised with. Class prejudice was used to articulate race prejudice - all Chinese were socially inferior.

## Sexual Taboos

### Sex

The sexual taboo, as has been shown, was an important and conspicuous theme in fiction about China. It is difficult to know whether the taboo was more honoured in the breach than in the observance, but it was certainly honoured in the public and institutional observance; certainly when it came to marriage. Abroad has always been associated with sexual opportunity, and certainly not just by the British. Frequently this was for the banal reason that it was through going abroad that many young Britons left the security and restraining influence of family and home society for the first time. The ban on marriages in most companies on the first term's service should not be forgotten either.<sup>223</sup> Abroad was also associated with eroticism and pornography, especially in popular fictions. Chinese settings and Chinese women, as was shown in chapter 2, were often the subject of such portrayals.

Although still largely bachelor societies the treaty ports, unlike during the earlier stage of the British presence,<sup>224</sup> contained enough wives, daughters, single working women, White Russian, Eurasian and European prostitutes and vulnerable (or artful) passport-less women to make stable sexual relationships with Chinese as much "unnecessary" as taboo. This at least was the public view. "Most of us preferred Shanghai because the girls were white"<sup>225</sup> recalled a sailor, although that still leaves a minority

<sup>221</sup> Sherry, *Life of Graham Greene*, pp.200, 205-209.

<sup>222</sup> W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 25/3/27, FSC CH5/4.

<sup>223</sup> Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, pp.88, 104; John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford, 1988), pp.99-102; Fussell, *Abroad*, pp.113-16.

<sup>224</sup> Having only been opened to foreigners in 1861 Hankou saw the establishment of a "Hankou Home for Eurasian Children" in 1888, W.T. Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796-1889* (Stanford, 1984), p.50.

<sup>225</sup> ST - 18, Reel 2, p.11; Ch'en, *China and the West*, pp.215-16. The rate of venereal disease makes it quite clear that British sailors used prostitutes in China, Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, pp.140-41, 142, "Fourth Submarine Flotilla Submarine Report for the quarter ended 31st March 1927", China S46, 4/5/27, ADM116/2510 M2489/27; Hauser, *City for Sale*, pp.267-69. The American experience was probably indicative, allowing for greater purchasing power due to greater rates of pay in the US armed forces: "The

who “tasted some of the fruits.”<sup>226</sup> Adultery seems to have been fairly common in the larger communities as well if the impressionistic evidence of court reports and the disgust of some visitors is to be believed.<sup>227</sup>

Male sexual exploitation, then as now, was a feature of expatriate life. The social and peer-pressure barrier against mixed marriage even with Eurasians was “a complete alibi if you found yourself getting into trouble;”<sup>228</sup> as one company director put it, “there was no need to.”<sup>229</sup> The letters of R.M. Tinkler relate the opportunities to exploit Russian women which he enjoyed and by which he maintained his “self-respect” and avoided Asian women.<sup>230</sup> His dislike of “Asians” was unusual, Japanese mistresses were very common in colonial society in Malaya and Burma and Japanese prostitutes much in demand.<sup>231</sup>

Chinese women were still largely perceived as being generically ugly,<sup>232</sup> although this is difficult to equate with the developing screen image of actresses such as Anna May Wong.<sup>233</sup> It seems to be a cliché that did not always survive real meetings although one commentator was apt to believe that any prettiness among Chinese women was due to their having some “white blood.”<sup>234</sup> Harold Acton’s aesthetic pursuit led him to prefer Chinese “beauty and indifference” to the charms of the Russians, his candidness and his choice were singular, if ambiguous.<sup>235</sup> Victor Purcell was unusual in admitting to having

two largest problems faced by the American military in China were alcohol and venereal disease”, Noble, *Eagle and the Dragon*, p.134. For salacious portraits of White Russian prostitution see Kisch, *Secret China*, pp.117-29, and Sergeant, *Shanghai*, pp.30-67.

<sup>226</sup> BBC, *Lion and Dragon*, Caulton, Tape roll 36/1, p.7. Cantonese prostitutes known as “salt water sisters” usually specialised in serving foreigners, Betty Peh-T’i Wei, *Shanghai* (Hong Kong, 1987), p.142.

<sup>227</sup> Hilken papers, letter to Kathleen Hilken, 22/11/30; Tinkler papers, letter to Aunt Florence, 9/1/21, letter to Edith, 10/10/23; See also an insinuating article reprinted from the *Daily Express* on the British women of Singapore, *NCH*, 26/5/28, p.355, “City of Tragic Wives”; Sir Frederick Whyte, adviser to the Nationalist Government, eloped with a Baroness Pidall in 1930 “having first explained his intentions to Baron Pidall” but not to his employers, Maze to Stephenson, 20/10/30, Maze papers, Confidential Letters, Vol.5.

<sup>228</sup> ST - 13, p.2.

<sup>229</sup> ST - 19, p.20.

<sup>230</sup> Tinkler papers, Letters to Edith 3/10/22, 10/10/23, 3/2/25.

<sup>231</sup> Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, pp.108, 133. The reasons behind this popularity were that Japanese women were “higher up the social scale, educated and with a proper training for their art”, *ibid.*, pp.88-89.

<sup>232</sup> The standard view can be found in *China As it Really is*, by “A Resident in Peking” [L.M. King] (London, 1912), pp.50-52. The irony here, as P.D. Coates has pointed out, is that the author later married a Tibetan, *China Consuls*, pp.418-23. The ritual recording of female ugliness can be found in Hamilton papers, Journal, 21/5/27; Drage papers, Journal 18/12/23; both sexes were ugly as far as Stella Benson was concerned, Diaries, 22/11/29.

<sup>233</sup> In such films as *Piccadilly*, 1929; *Shanghai Express*, 1932 and also on the stage in *A Circle of Chalk* in 1929; *Stormy Weather*, 1935, uses an unnamed Chinese girl as its principal sex-symbol.

<sup>234</sup> Drage papers, Journal, 17/10/23.

<sup>235</sup> Acton, *Memoirs*, pp.290-91. The intention behind the choice is ambiguous, not so Blofeld’s, *City of Lingering Splendour*, pp.86-90, and *passim*. There seems some reason on this point to doubt the veracity of Malcom Macdonald’s claim that on his first visit to Beijing in 1929 Sir Miles Lampson arranged, unilaterally, for him to visit a Chinese prostitute, M. Macdonald, *Inside China* (London, 1980), pp.27-31. Certainly Lampson’s biographer thinks the story unlikely (personal communication from Dr. David Steeds). Of course, some other member of the Legation staff may have organized it. However, when the Lytton Commission visited Beijing in 1932, Lord Lytton was taken to see a brothel by the Legation’s chief

set up a Chinese mistress in Guangzhou in 1921/2. A desire for a “sleeping dictionary” and “a bourgeois hankering after a regular establishment in place of brief encounters” were given as the reasons. While Britons often lived with Russians, it “was fairly common... and the Japanese seemed to be quite popular”, few lived with Chinese. (American servicemen mostly switched to Russian mistresses after the White influx from the Chinese women they knew as “pigs”.)<sup>236</sup>

## Marriage

To strengthen further its national and racial solidarity British society in China maintained a policy of colour-determined endogamy for middle class men. There were mixed marriages but pressure was exerted by relatives, colleagues and superiors to make sure that young businessmen and consuls did not get involved with Chinese, Eurasians or Russians.<sup>237</sup> If they did their “services were normally dispensed with immediately” by companies such as Swires, Jardines, Standard Oil and the APC.<sup>238</sup> The element of paternal protection had three purposes: subordinating the individual to his company, protecting him in the expatriate society he had chosen to live in and protecting that society from convention-breakers.<sup>239</sup>

The marriages that did take place seem to have done so outside China between overseas Chinese students and local women. Conservative Chinese families were not in favour of such unions either. Liu Rongsheng (O.S. Lieu) a Shanghai businessman who was active mover in the reconciliation of foreigners and Chinese in Shanghai wrote more than once to three of his sons studying in Cambridge to warn them against such unions. Indeed, at their farewell party they had been publically cautioned against them.<sup>240</sup> British

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Chinese Writer whilst Lady Lytton was taken to see an opium “den”, P.D. Coates, “Documents in Chinese from the Chinese Secretary’s Office, British Legation, Peking, 1861-1939”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 17, 2 (1983), p.244. Beijing had its own foreign prostitutes in an area close to the Legations, S. Gamble, *Peking: A Social Survey* (London, 1921), p.247.

<sup>236</sup> V. Purcell, *Memoirs of a Malayan Official* (London, 1969), pp.129-33; ST - 1, p.45; Noble, *Eagle and the Dragon*, p.129. Homosexuality is less well-documented although it seems that the foreign community in Beijing had a not wholly unfounded homosexual reputation. It was, after all, the city where Backhouse hid out his last years and composed his pornographic fantasies; Fitzgerald, *Why China?*, p.152; *Oriental Affairs*, July 1937, p.167; Trevor-Roper, *Hermit of Peking*, pp.291-334.

<sup>237</sup> Cook, *Lion and the Dragon*, p.27; F.H.H. King, *The History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Volume three: The Hongkong Bank between the Wars and the Bank Interned, 1919-1945: Return from Granduer* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.285-89; “Foreign, native, half-caste, are definitely taboo” wrote the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank’s Chief Manager in 1937, this ban was maintained until 1941 as far as Chinese were concerned, *ibid.*, pp.286, 288.

<sup>238</sup> ST - 19, p.6.

<sup>239</sup> This was not a purely British phenomenon, see, for example the testimony of American George E. Sokolsky, “My Mixed Marriage”, *Atlantic Magazine*, August 1933, pp.137-46.

<sup>240</sup> All three sons quite agreed, and the warnings were unnecessary, Liu Rongsheng to his sons, 18/8/33, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Chinese Business History Resource Centre, Liu Rongsheng archives, 14-014.

society was more liberal in this matter.<sup>241</sup> Lt. Hilken's letters from the China Station to his sister studying in Vancouver are full of attempts to persuade her not to marry "Tong, or any other chink!" Whilst conceding Tong's probable worth and intelligence he stated that:

you would find the situation here very embarrassing if you came here [Hong Kong] together. Except in business, and on official occasions the two races do not mix at all.<sup>242</sup>

Hilken's point is valid - mixed marriages would have necessitated a greater amount of mixed socialising than the demands of British self-ascription accepted on any except formal occasions. A further problem could arise in the differences in Chinese and British marriage customs but was probably feared more as a result of sensationalist fictional perceptions than objective ones. It was commonly assumed that a Westernised Chinese husband would "revert to type" in China (usually involving the taking of concubines) and treaty port opinion always had examples of this to present to unbelievers, quite apart from the lessons to be learnt from fictions on the subject.<sup>243</sup>

British women who intended to travel to China to marry Chinese men were interviewed by the Far East Department of the Foreign Office in an endeavour "to persuade [them] to give up the idea of such a marriage". An official leaflet pointed out that the consequent loss of British nationality meant that British law could not "protect [them] in China from a treatment which does not conform with the rules applicable in Christian countries in regard to marriage".<sup>244</sup>

Unorthodox unions were "letting the side down". Of those who married Russians one woman remarked that "they were not quite as good as they should be."<sup>245</sup> Unsurprisingly, given their prominent denigration in fiction, Eurasians were widely disliked, both as the partners and as issue. A vulgar Social Darwinian prejudice against mixed-types is much in evidence; William Sewell's fictional alter ego found himself

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<sup>241</sup> This was a familiar colonial pattern, on the Nigerian case see Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire*, p.51.

<sup>242</sup> Hilken papers, letters to Kathleen Hilken, 21/1/30, 22/12/30, she was obviously hard to convince.

<sup>243</sup> Logan, *China*, p.54; Dobson, *China Cycle*, pp.49-50; G. and D. Barbour, "Diary" (Excerpts from Letters), 1921, p.36, LMS China Personal Box 14; A *NCH* Correspondent in Shantou wrote that marriages involving European Women and Chinese men had better chances of survival than those between Chinese men and Southeast Asians "strange as this may seem on first hand", because of the presumed greater Westernization, education and therefore compatibility of the Chinese spouses, 5/5/28, p.229, "Mixed Marriages in China". See also the case of a woman who had married a Chinese student in Britain but who had been largely abandoned and illtreated in China, Rev. W.R. Stobie to Mr Blunt, 23/9/30, FO670\224 2a.

<sup>244</sup> If they could not make the journey to London they were interviewed at home by a woman representative from the Overseas Settlement Department (Women) at the Passport Office, E.S. Harris, minute, 4/9/35, on Cadogan to Foreign Office, No.1231, 31/7/35, T10589/10589/378, FO372/3139; "Marriages Abroad and in the United Kingdom", *ibid*; the correspondence was prompted by the case of Miss Lillian May, who wished to visit her fiancé in Wusi and who was "suitably warned" beforehand but who had defied the efforts of the Nanjing Consul-General to locate her; she was eventually repatriated, unmarried, *ibid.*, and "Repatriation of Miss Lillian May," FO291/21/5 to Shanghai No.72, FO232/48/13T 1936.

<sup>245</sup> ST - 8, p.35

“repelled” by the idea of mixed marriages and the progeny who “should not have been”; Hauser described the women as “slightly simian half-castes.”<sup>246</sup>

A recurring theme in correspondence from men in China is fear of male Chinese sexual desire for “white” women. Prejudice against negro male sexuality is well documented and if sex is “at the very heart of racism” then it is so as a totemic assertion of power relations.<sup>247</sup> Henri Champly’s apocalyptic writings, for example, were predicated on a sexual undermining of “white” racial superiority and purity through European prostitution in Shanghai.<sup>248</sup> In general the fear was articulated, often salaciously, as rape-hysteria. To an audience at the American Women’s Club after the Nanjing incident in 1927 Lenox Simpson demanded that “adequate punishments and reprisals which would not be forgotten should be carried out” by the foreign powers in retaliation for attacks on foreign women.<sup>249</sup> The rapes that supposedly accompanied the incident were constantly held up as a sure guide to normal Chinese sexual etiquette. Chinese men were excluded from close physical proximity with foreign women for this reason, for example in swimming clubs. The Shanghai Rowing Club refused to allow Chinese to join the club in 1930 as, it “provides facilities for mixed bathing to which the Chinese would not be welcome.”<sup>250</sup> Chinese had been kept out of European brothels, until the advent of the Russians after 1917, and the Cabarets too.<sup>251</sup> Drage records his unease at friendship between an American missionary woman and her Chinese landlord in the following terms: “it will always seem queer to me to hear a coloured man call a white girl by her Christian name,” the sub-text is clearly sexual.<sup>252</sup> Marjorie Clements reported the horrified reactions of some American soldiers at her intention to spend “a night alone with the “Chinks”” in a second class railway carriage,<sup>253</sup> for related reasons

<sup>246</sup> Ex-Consul E.T.C. Werner invoked Herbert Spencer to reinforce his belief that “In all sexual matters “East is East, and West is West””, any other course being at best “degrading” to the “thinking man”, *Autumn Leaves, An Autobiography...* (Shanghai, 1928), p.494-95; Sewell papers, Unpublished Novel “Shades” [1929], SOAS PPMS/16/19; Hauser, *City for Sale*, p.261; G.W. Swire to C.C. Scott, 31/1/29, SP ADD 15. Sewell was much later to give a much more sympathetic and positive picture of such a marriage in another unpublished novel “Molly Wu”, both attitudes largely products of their time.

<sup>247</sup> Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, p.204-205. See also Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American attitudes towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1968), pp.150-63, and Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire*, pp.237-40; Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, p.203.

<sup>248</sup> See his *Road to Shanghai* and *White Women, Coloured Men*, *passim*..

<sup>249</sup> “When it came to trouble no self-respecting Naval Officer would leave a European woman to the tender mercies of these swine” wrote Commander Hamilton, Hamilton papers, Journal, 12/6/27. For Simpson see *NCH*, 14/5/27, p.290.

<sup>250</sup> By 1928 this ban no longer applied to the *municipal* pool in Shanghai, *NCH*, 7/7/28, p.19; Brennan to Lampson, 6/6/30, Shanghai No.150, FO228\4285\4 69z; An extension of this hysteria is suggested by the case of one Kong Tsau-zang (“wearing flashy foreign clothes”) who was charged with “having had the unspeakable impertinence and effrontery to walk up to an American girl in front of the Palace Hotel and... fondle her”, *CE*, 22/9/28, p.393.

<sup>251</sup> Wei, *Shanghai*, p.142; Ch’en, *China and the West*, p.217; *NCH*, 6/10/28, p.36, “Shanghai Never Sleeps”.

<sup>252</sup> Drage papers, Diary 21/10/25. See also King, *History*, Volume three, pp.288-89.

<sup>253</sup> Marjorie Clements, Letter to Mrs May, 20/6/31, LMS China Personal Box 13.

William Sewell and others decried the effect of the portrayal of European women in Western films (“the antics of the bathing beauties of the West”) as corrosive and dangerous, both in print and in his lectures.<sup>254</sup> The dress and dancing of European women in China also came in for such criticism.<sup>255</sup> This taboo was characteristic of European colonial societies.<sup>256</sup>

### Sex and Class

There was a class aspect to the sexual taboo. “They were a bit more funny about their office staffs, because they came into the social life of Hong Kong much more than we did” remembered one sailor of his employers.<sup>257</sup> Chinese prostitutes were provided for the troops of the Shanghai Defence Force in 1927.<sup>258</sup> Marriages with Russians did occur and, as in India, so did marriages between Eurasians and lower-class Britons.<sup>259</sup> An article in the *North China Herald* in 1928 mocked this: “I hain’t no Don John, but I just been a’lookin’ around here a month or so and already I can sign on the dotted line with a Princess no less” an army Private is quoted as saying.<sup>260</sup> In passport-hungry Shanghai the motive could also certainly be mercenary.<sup>261</sup> This class divide was certainly present in the US armed forces whose officers would have ruined their careers but many of whose enlisted men did marry Chinese, at least before the Russian influx.<sup>262</sup>

<sup>254</sup> W.G. Sewell, *Land and Life of China* (London, 1933), p.130; Engagement Diary, “Talk to Bridlington Literary and Debating Society 9/1/31”, Sewell papers, SOAS PP/MS/16; Paul King, *Weighed in China’s Balance* (London, 1928), pp.190-91; O.W. Philips “Memoir”, Unpublished, [1961-2], p.217, IWM PP/MCR/153; “Nude Models and Public Morals”, *China Critic*, 31/7/30, pp.724-25.

<sup>255</sup> Werner, *Autumn Leaves*, pp.518-27; see also Ch’en, *China and the West*, p.219-20. This was a corollary to the widespread belief that “In the context of Empire, white women were further charged with upholding prestige, morals and civilized standards”, Brownfoot, “Sisters Under the Skin”, p.48.

<sup>256</sup> Ann Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures”, Jan Brennan, ed., *Imperial Monkey Business: Racial Supremacy in Social Darwinist Theory and Colonial Practice* (Amsterdam, 1990), pp.46-48.

<sup>257</sup> ST - 1, p.45.

<sup>258</sup> Chinese brothels were taken over as *maisons tolérées* to curb the spread of venereal diseases among the force. Patients suffering from these complaints outnumbered other SDF hospital patients and overwhelmed the facilities initially provided. In April 1927 they accounted for “practically all” the patients, *CWR*, 18/2/28, p.300; *CET* 26/1/28, p.55; “No.3 British General Hospital 1927 Jan-July, War Diary,” WO191/43 [SDF].

<sup>259</sup> Allen, *Plain Tales*, p.159. Of 249 marriages registered at the British Consulate General in Tianjin between October 1919 and April 1934 53 were to Russian women, and 4 to Chinese. The great majority of the British husbands were Customs Officers, servicemen or else were employed in other lower-class or lower-middle class positions, FO674\321-324 *passim*. In Hankou similar marriages accounted for 29 and 4 out of 150 registrations between 1917 and 1936, FO666\18-20 *passim*.

<sup>260</sup> *NCH*, 17/11/28, p.266, “The Princesses of Shanghai: What the Welch Regiment are Afraid of Missing”.

<sup>261</sup> 261 Cook, *Lion and the Dragon*, p.26. See the marriage “contract” between A.V. Millar, a White Russian, and E.T. Maitland, a Briton, preserved in NARA SMP D7508. It cost her \$2,500 Shanghai currency, and the expenses incurred, and was to be a purely nominal arrangement.

<sup>262</sup> Noble, *Eagle and the Dragon*, pp.129-30.

## Sex in the Outports

Social and sexual isolation were compounded in the outports. Stella Benson described the Nanning foreign community in 1929 as “9 missionaries, 3 unregenerates”. Of the unregenerates, the Customs outdoorman was ill with syphilis contracted from a Chinese prostitute while twenty three year old Humphreys of the APC was “rather obsessed by his physical loneliness” and pinned his hopes on the local missionary girls. Fear of syphilis kept him away from the local prostitutes.<sup>263</sup> Previous occupants of the Nanning APC post had included one suicide, two alcoholics, one murder victim and one man who did take a Chinese mistress; another “Mercifully for him was married just before he arrived here and left within four months.”<sup>264</sup>

Even missionaries suffered. Marjorie Clements admitted sexual and emotional frustration and anger at the Victorian proprieties of a widower colleague which denied her even the most respectable companionship. Methodist Dr. Hadden’s “platonic friendships” were too much for his scandalised colleagues who refused to let him return to China without his wife.<sup>265</sup>

Other nationals were more open about sexual matters - such as Logan’s fifteen French engineers, each with his concubine - but if Nanning is at all representative then it would appear that the British were just quieter about things, in the light of greater social taboos.<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, whilst there must have been more sexual connoisseurs along the lines of Havelock Ellis’ “G.R.” it would appear that most sexual relations with Chinese women would be matters of contingency and necessity. Stella Benson’s husband wrote to her from Manchuria when she was wintering elsewhere that:

You know that continence is a sore to me at anytime. And for 6 months at a stretch in this place, where one sits all day indoors in stuffy rooms, listening to the wind blowing outside, it really is awful.<sup>267</sup>

Restrictions on marriage and the shortage of eligible women were the major cause of the situation and marriage was seen as the solution. This was so especially for those such as Charles Addis whose religious qualms about fornication eventually got the better of their libidos.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>263</sup> Benson Diaries, 24/3/30; 9/2/30; 11/2/30; 16/2/30.

<sup>264</sup> J.M. Philips papers, letter to P.S. Jones, 7/4/26.

<sup>265</sup> Marjorie Clements, Letters to Mrs May, 23/9/32, 4/3/32, LMS China Personal Box 13; H.B. Rattenbury to A.W. Hooker, 21/1/31, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 405.

<sup>266</sup> Logan, *China*, p.54; intermarriage was also French Colonial policy, Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, p.214; “As far the morals of Shamian go I give it full marks for not talking scandal. But for those so inclined the facilities for vice are unlimited”, J.M. Philips papers, letter to P.S. Jones, 21/9/24. Public reticence was also the order of the day in colonial Nigeria, Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire*, pp.48-51.

<sup>267</sup> Quoted by Grant, *Stella Benson*, p.232; he took a Russian mistress but had previously discussed taking a “docile Chinese wife”, *ibid.*, pp.226, 233-34. For “G.R.” see Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Volume III, (Philadelphia, 1903 and 1922), Appendix B, History, No.Xiii, pp.306-15, quoted in Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, pp.131-33.

<sup>268</sup> Dayer, *Capital and Empire*, pp.13-14, 31.

### **Socialisation and Imperial Distance**

The British poor in China were once described as a “disgrace to our race”.<sup>269</sup> The difference between racial and imperial prestige was not always apparent. Usually the one was a synonym for the other. The sexual and social taboos helped maintain the important distancing of the rulers (in this case the informal rulers) from their (informal) subjects. Close contact with the Chinese was felt by some to be corrupting of British character, and not just for those whose interest in the language and customs got the better of them. The theatre of official and municipal life was about maintaining prestige and visible power on the streets. The public parades of the SVC and foreign defence forces and the use of Sikh policemen was an expression of this as was the continued gunboat presence. Extraterritoriality was not going to be surrendered in any *de facto* way before any concessions were made *de jure*. Some felt that this surrender was already the case outside the concessions, but defiance remained one of the articles of faith of the die-hard.

“White” prestige in China was felt to have been irrevocably damaged by three events, firstly the Japanese defeat of Russia in 1905, secondly the Chinese declaration of war on the Germany in 1917 and the ending of German extraterritoriality;<sup>270</sup> and thirdly the White Russian refugee influx. Countless tales were told about the glee with which the Chinese maltreated White Russians, the Tianjin British Municipal Council’s propaganda bureau making a speciality of these stories.<sup>271</sup>

Anti-Communism was a force strong enough to overcome racial scruples but it was usually accompanied by some qualms. Hamilton described the Russians of Hankou being rounded up in an anti-communist purge in that city, seeing men, women and children “roped and chained together and marched through the freezing streets in their night attire - a dangerous precedent to my mind although they were communists.”<sup>272</sup> The shooting of the Soviet consular staff in Guangzhou after the failed communist uprising there in 1927 occasioned similar mixed feelings mixed with delight at the chance given to get hold of the Consulate’s documents.<sup>273</sup>

### **Virulence in extremis**

The cumulative result of this distrust and segregation can be glimpsed in the extreme ways in which Britons in China reacted as a community and as individuals to

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<sup>269</sup>269 NCH, 25/2/28, p.312.

<sup>270</sup> Hamilton papers, Journal, 28/1/28; Gilbert, *What’s Wrong*, pp.265-68.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., pp.268-72; See, for example, the *Bulletin of the Tientsin British Committee of Information*, No.34, “A Trial for Murder in the Chinese Courts”, 7/2/34. Also see Pepper, *China*, pp.268-74. For an account of the Russian community see John J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists: Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945* (London, 1978).

<sup>272</sup> Hamilton papers, Journal, 20/12/27.

<sup>273</sup> See Lampson’s minute on Canton No.209, 28/12/27, FO228\3777\3 14b.



occurrences such as the Nanjing incident and the Thorburn case, or personal attacks: that is, when the protection afforded by the community broke down.<sup>274</sup> This was often articulated as a personal threat from *all* Chinese, who were blamed *en masse* for individual and often incidental cases of banditry and assault. Individual threats were swiftly re-articulated in generic terms which underlined the basic insecurity of the British in China and their suspicion of all Chinese. All Chinese were held accountable, and punishable, for the actions of individuals. The parallels with fictional treatments of “yellow perils” and vindictive mandarins are tangible.

After being attacked in Nanjing in 1930 one British woman’s “hatred of the Chinese [was] unbounded”. Her “inability to get on with or to keep her servants” was well known to the Consul-General and, after twenty years in China, she spoke no Chinese.<sup>275</sup> After Bertram Lenox Simpson’s murder it was written of his widow that “the sooner she gets far away from this country and its natives the better it will be for her health.”<sup>276</sup> R.M. Tinkler wanted to “have a go at these yellow Chinese swine” in 1921 and in the immediate aftermath of May 30th 1925, while “longing for an opportunity to kill a bunch,” had to make do with ill-treating those arrested.<sup>277</sup>

These are extreme cases but they are not exceptional and show a consistent pattern of reactions related to the propensity for violence towards Chinese and failure to perceive them as individuals. This insecurity was articulated as furious hostility. It was often fuelled by impotence: only rarely were the perpetrators of crimes brought to account, Chinese authorities were often felt to be ineffective and even obstructive in such cases, and the British establishment no longer wielded the big stick to encourage the Chinese. When J.M. Philips was killed by bandits in 1926 three British gunboats were rushed to the spot. When John Thorburn went missing in 1931 a lone vice-consul went to trace his steps.<sup>278</sup>

### **Conclusion - Thinking of Lucknow**

As a result of its social and professional structures and images of itself and the Chinese, and because of the reasons which led people to go there, British society in China was imperialist and profoundly insular and inward looking. Only missionaries or those with a penchant for adventure or the exotic attempted to establish themselves outside

<sup>274</sup> See, for example, the hysteria generated by the attempted sexual assault of a young American child at Guling by a Chinese policeman, *NCH*, 21/7/28, pp.141, 143, 28/7/28, p.187, 4/8/28, pp.187, 194.

<sup>275</sup> “Interview between Mr Clarke and Mrs Hearne on 25/9/30”, Minister’s Tour Series No.287, 27/9/30, FO228\4185\22 20s; Ingram to Legation, No.59, 13/8/30, FO228\4185\14 20s.

<sup>276</sup> G.A. Mossop to G.A. Herbert, 10/3/31, FO678\2024.

<sup>277</sup> Tinkler papers, letter to Aunt Florence, 9/7/21, letters to Edith, 26/6/25, 27/7/25.

<sup>278</sup> *NCH*, 26/6/26, p.579; *CYB* 1931-32, pp.268-69. The exception was in the case of piracy, but the Royal Navy’s firm response to the *Shuntien* piracy in 1934, which involved the outright violation of Chinese territorial integrity, marked the end of the era of effective gunboat diplomacy, S.L. Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise: British China Policy 1933-37* (Manchester, 1975), pp.11-12.

their own expatriate society. It was a pseudo-colonial society in character, without the outward responsibilities and tact of a colonial ruling class toward the ruled, as shown perhaps in the fact that only the Hong Kong Jockey Club ever admitted Chinese members. Individual behaviour towards the Chinese could certainly be aggressive and insulting but these were cases of minority behaviour. Mass behaviour towards China such as the parading of the SVC and the slow time it took to allow Chinese representation on the SMC showed an indifference to the wider realities and sensibilities of Chinese politics and society, and the initial ratepayers' vote against extending that SMC representation in 1930 also showed a hostility towards the treaty port oligarchs. Usually hostility to the Chinese took more subtle and less violent forms and was a direct product of the socialisation of new members into the treaty port society, and the demands made on them which militated against any other than superficial or voyeuristic relationships with China and the Chinese.<sup>279</sup>

The attitudes towards the Chinese prevalent in metropolitan culture and learnt through the processes of treaty port socialisation and reinforced by the structure of treaty port society militated against Britons adopting anything but a hostile attitude towards the diplomatic concessions necessitated by the victory of the *Guomindang*. The privileges and indeed the livelihoods of the majority of treaty port Britons were felt to depend on the perpetuation of the relationship with the Chinese founded on this imperial structure. "One thought instinctively of Lucknow" wrote the Reverend Scott when he saw the Chongqing APC installation surrounded by Chinese troops and flying the Fag in 1926.<sup>280</sup> The following three chapters will show how far attitudes were articulated within the various sectors of treaty port society, and how intrusive they were in relations between Chinese and Britons. Then they will show how attempts were made by various official and private individuals to stop people instinctively thinking of Lucknow and Empire, and to make them think of China, the Chinese nationalist present and the future.

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<sup>279</sup> "In Lampson's day one student interpreter was rebuked for spending too much time exploring Peking and not enough time at the Club or on the Hockey pitch", Coates, *China Consuls*, p.449. When stationed in Shanghai one Swire employee only once went to the Chinese city and did so on "a sightseeing trip", ST - 22, p.9

<sup>280</sup> Scott papers, Letter to his sisters, 23/10/26. Scott was not alone in using the Lucknow simile; Louise Jordan Miln's authorial voice described the situation in Shanghai in January 1927 in a similar way: "There were Englishmen in Shanghai who thought of Lucknow: a few who said among themselves, but particularly careful not to be overheard saying it, that before long our position in the Settlement might be essentially a one of siege as ever Lucknow had been. And where was our Residency here? Lucknow's had been a sorry refuge, and, God knows, a sad one. But it had been a refuge; its walls held. Where were our walls in Shanghai? Barbed wire!", *The Flutes of Shanghai* (London, 1928), p.153.

## Chapter 4

### Chinese Characteristics and British Diplomats

#### *Introduction*

The strength of the attitudes inculcated through treaty port socialisation has been shown in the previous two chapters, as have their pervasiveness and consistency. Although their precise articulation may have altered from time to time, they faced no major upset until the Nationalist Revolution. After 1925 important changes in British government policy and treaty port activity became necessary. This chapter will deal with the British establishment in China, and with the attempts of certain individuals within it, to foster change in the British treaty port community by reforming concession life. These reforms were also to influence the personal behaviour of individual Britons by altering the structures within which their socialisation took place.

This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive diplomatic history of this period of Sino-British relations.<sup>1</sup> That can best be studied in Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat* and D.C. Wilson's "Britain and the Kuomintang". It will, however, show how the general discourse of Chinese characteristics thoroughly permeated the attitudes of the British establishment. It would, of course, be surprising if Britons who worked for the establishment did not bring to their jobs the attitudes taught by the culture of information in the metropole, and by treaty port socialisation, and interpreted and articulated their own experiences and work using the vocabulary of that discourse. It is also not to be assumed that there was no awareness of the strength

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<sup>1</sup> That can best be studied in Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat* and D.C. Wilson's "Britain and the Kuomintang".

and implications for British behaviour of British attitudes.<sup>2</sup> However, even with that qualification it is evident from both the quotidian and more theoretical files, that the discourse on China examined in chapter 2 was widely, if variably, accepted by British officials and influenced their work.

### *Part I: The British Establishment in China*

The British community in China was ultimately judged in China and abroad by the diplomacy of the British Government. In China it was represented by a Legation (it was not upgraded to an embassy until 1935),<sup>3</sup> the Consular service, armed forces in Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai, and the China Station ships on the Yangzi and Pearl rivers; there were the unofficial arms of diplomacy: the foreigners who controlled the Chinese Maritime Customs, the Salt Gabelle, and Posts, the International Settlements and British Concessions, men with whom the British authorities had established close working relations.<sup>4</sup> The Shanghai International

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<sup>2</sup> See M.G. Fry's conclusions in the context of a similar academic analysis, "In Pursuit of Lloyd George: International History and the Social Sciences", B.J.C. McKercher and D.J. Moss, eds., *Shadow and Substance in British Foreign Policy 1895-1939: Memorial Essays Honouring C.J. Lowe* (Edmonton, 1984), pp. 249-80.

<sup>3</sup> This was not a fact of great note. Britain only had 8 Embassies at the end of the Great War, but the upgrading does show a change in the perceived importance of the Government of China, and Britain's need to deal with it directly, rather than, as before 1925, through the structures of informal empire. The lack of effective central authority between 1911 and 1927 was not the reason for China's diplomatic status, although it was an excuse: there had only been a Legation under the centralised empire and it is arguable that centralisation after 1927 was so patchily accomplished as to discount Nanjing's claims to national authority, D. Dilks "The British Foreign Office Between the Wars", McKercher and Moss, *Shadow and Substance*, p. 183; R.E. Bedeski, *State-Building in Modern China: The Kuomintang in the prewar period* (Berkeley, 1981), pp. 48-49.

<sup>4</sup> Men such as Sir Francis Aglen, head of the Chinese Maritime Customs until 1927, his putative successor A.H.F. Edwardes, and, from 1913, the Foreign Chief Inspector of the Salt Gabelle. At lower levels E.W. Mead, for example, Foreign Secretary of the Chinese Government Salt Gabelle helped the British, Japanese and French ministers draft a statement about the future of that institution in 1928, when it was facing unilaterally instituted Nationalist reforms, whilst S.V. Mills, an official hydrographer for the Chinese Admiralty kept Naval Intelligence in Shanghai informed about Nationalist plans to survey the Yangzi, Aveling minute on "Draft Statement to be issued to Press by Jap., French and British Legations", 16/7/28, FO228\3770\77 12c; C-in-C China Station, Tywhitt to Lampson, 16/5/28, No.1038, FO228\3875\1 63.

Settlement was widely seen in China as a British Concession<sup>5</sup> whilst the *North China Daily News* was seen as an official British newspaper. As a result of these perceptions the Legation *had* to wield informal influence on the Concessions and the press, besides exercising the varying constitutional and judicial powers held by consuls and diplomats.<sup>6</sup> There was also the colony of Hong Kong which, for all its integration in the Chinese economy and the pattern of British treaty port life, was not a part of the British China establishment although it was the Head Quarters of the China Command, which affected the perspective of military matters.

### *Pressures for Reform*

By 1928 reforming the British community in China became a necessity. Nationalistic demands by the Chinese were compounded by the need to protect long-term trade interests. British and American public opinion was widely favourable to abstract notions of Chinese nationalism and critical of the British China community, especially such totemic acts as the exclusion of Chinese from parks in the Shanghai International Settlement. With the Nationalist advance on the Yangzi cities and the sending of the SDF Shanghai was the focus of much media attention from December 1926 to April 1927. Criticisms by visiting journalists such as Arthur Ransome, which were rejected in the treaty ports on the grounds of the inexperience or ideological hostility of their articulators, were regarded as important, or at least influential, by the

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<sup>5</sup> Indeed referring to it as such was a common anti-British tactic. Consul Hewlett, in Xiamen, was driven to publish a pamphlet in Chinese refuting this claim in 1925, *Forty Years*, pp. 159-60.

<sup>6</sup> The counter proposition, that the “China hands” wielded a great deal of direct influence over British policy formation, whilst perhaps a useful fiction in the treaty ports and a charge levelled by Chinese critics, has been repeatedly disproved, see, for example, Pauline Y.N. Thomas, “The Foreign Office and the Business Lobby: British Official and Commercial Hostility to Treaty Revision in China 1925-1930” (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1981), pp. 319-31.

Foreign Office. The treaty port commentators were beginning to lose their influential monopoly of interpretations of China.<sup>7</sup>

British policy in the years 1928 to 1931 was theoretically based upon the concessions embodied in the December Memorandum and the “January Offer”. These documents represented the British attempt to regain the initiative from the unilaterally-inclined reformist National Government and to contain treaty reform to its own time-table.<sup>8</sup> This was the source of much friction after 1927 as National Government directives conflicted with the deliberately vague British time-table, while lower-level Nationalist functionaries acted as if *de facto* reform had already been achieved; chaotic conditions in many parts of China and jurisdictional disputes in others fuelled this.<sup>9</sup> The vocabulary of retreat was prominent; the revolutionary events of early 1927 created an atmosphere of panic in the treaty ports which was shared by the British establishment and which retarded the work of treaty revision, making a *rapprochement* with the *Guomindang* difficult. The British Minister Sir Miles Lampson was actually fighting on several fronts, trying at once to restrain and reassure the British community and goad it into concessions, while dealing with the Foreign Office in London and with the National Government and its lower level officials.

In general the British were attempting to re-establish their position in China after it had become belligerently adrift in 1925, and especially in 1927. There was a danger that sending troops would be seen, by the Chinese, by other foreign powers,

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<sup>7</sup> Ransome, *Chinese Puzzle*, pp. 28-32. See a hostile review of his “prejudiced and superficial” book in *NCH*, 24/3/28, p. 506. On the settlement’s sensitivity see G.E. Marden, *Municipal Gazette*, 19/4/28, p. 159c and Lionel Curtis’ farewell speech in Shanghai No.29, 13/2/30, Enc. *NCDN*, 13/2/30, FO228\4283\5 69; Mounsey to Lampson, S/O, 18/1/28, FO228\3883\8 69.

<sup>8</sup> In April 1928 Lampson minuted that: “My conclusion is that whilst we and the Foreign Office are debating what we will or will not agree to, we shall find that everything is taken, by a stroke of the pen”, Minute on “Tariff Autonomy”, FO228\3843\64 41c.

and by the treaty port British themselves, as Britain's only tangible policy in China, that or surrender to forcible seizure, as in Hankou; neither of these policies was expedient or acceptable.

### *Imperial Prestige and Revolutionary Nationalism*

British China policy did not exist in a sino-centric vacuum. International opinion was considered and there was a special sensitivity to American criticism.<sup>10</sup> Considerations of wider imperial defence and prestige were important; upholding that prestige was seen to be vital for Britain's position in Asia generally, let alone China.<sup>11</sup> The abandonment of Hankou set an example that some felt threatened that position. It was a humiliating surrender to non-European force.<sup>12</sup>

In practical terms the question of imperial defence meant that there was active monitoring, by an Indian Government agent and the Legation's M.I.6 officer, H.N. Steptoe, in contact with consuls and the SMP's Special Branch Division IV, of links between the *Guomindang* and Indian nationalists, and the activities of Indians in China.<sup>13</sup> The Shanghai settlement was also a perfect centre for Comintern activity

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<sup>9</sup> For a typical comment see Foochow No.54 30/11/28, FO228\3718\757 2.

<sup>10</sup> For the background to sensitivity to American opinion, partly prompted by concern over Naval policies, see B.J.C. McKercher "The British Diplomatic Service in the United States and the Chamberlain Foreign Office's Perceptions of Domestic America, 1924-1927: Images, Reality, and Diplomacy", in McKercher and Moss, *Shadow and Substance*, pp. 221-47.

<sup>11</sup> "The spectacle of the British being driven out of China is a direct incitement to the Indian enemies of the British connexion", A. Hirtzel to Austen Chamberlain, 17/1/27, FO800\260. See also Chamberlain to Lloyd George 19/1/27, FO800\260, and Lampson to Chamberlain 16/4/27 FO800\260.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, "Britain and the Kuomintang", pp. 535, 628. In later years some felt that Hankou was the first, catalytic defeat for European colonialism, H.E. Muriel, *Memoir*, p. 43, HSB S16.1, "Personalities and Narratives".

<sup>13</sup> On the monitoring of Indians which began in earnest in 1927 see "Section IV Special Branch", D.S.I. Golder, 11/2/36, NARA SMP D8/8, the attempted subversion of Indians continued throughout the 1930s, either by the Comintern or Japanese; see also "Indian Section", 17/6/29, NARA SMP D8/8. For an example of the routine cooperation between MI6 and the SMP see H.N. Steptoe to T.P. Givens, 20/5/31, NARA SMP D2400 and file. The reality of these fears can be gauged from R.C. North and X.J. Eudin, *M.N. Roy's Mission to China: The Communist-Kuomintang Split of 1927* (Berkeley, 1963),

directed against the European East and South Asian colonies.<sup>14</sup> China was therefore of strategic importance in intelligence matters. For the military it also supplied Britain's pacific fleet with an important cool-weather summer base at Weihaiwei.<sup>15</sup>

Upholding British prestige involved a wider range of activities. In China it had been built, historically, on the use and threat of force. The Chinese, it was widely felt, respected force and respected those who chastised them with good reason. Maintaining British prestige in the face of a militant anti-British nationalism was hardly easy, especially as the easy option, direct military action, had been vetoed; after all, prestige without force was dangerously close to "another word for bluff."<sup>16</sup> This was more profoundly felt among the British military establishment in China which had been clearly anxious for a fight during the early months of 1927.

An important factor was the Chinese concern for face, which it was felt should be shared by the British when dealing with them, in order to keep Chinese respect. This psychological approach rather conveniently justified the pomp of empire and attention to its outward prestige. Pomp also served to boost morale, when necessary.<sup>17</sup>

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pp. 15-19, and S.D. Gupta, *Comintern, India and the Colonial Question, 1920-37* (Calcutta, 1980), *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> After 1929 the Far East Bureau of the Comintern was based in Shanghai, W.J. Duiker *The Comintern and Vietnamese Communism* (Athens, Ohio, 1975), p. 20. The breaking up of the Noulens spy ring in 1931 involved liaison between the SMP's special branch, police in Singapore and in French Indo-China. Richard Sorge and members of his spy-ring operated in Shanghai and it has been claimed that Roger Hollis, later Director General of M.I.5, was recruited as a Soviet Agent in China when an employee of BAT, C.A. Willoughby, *Sorge: Soviet Master Spy* (London, 1952), pp. 221-56; Ruth Werner, *Sonya's Report*, (translated by Renate Simpson, London, 1991), pp. 22-97; Anthony Glees, *The Secrets of the Service: British Intelligence and Communist Subversion, 1939-51* (London, 1987), pp. 304-99. Consuls were circulated an official "List of Suspects", Mukden No.74, 2/11/28, FO228\3776\37 14b.

<sup>15</sup> Atwell, *British Mandarins and Chinese Reformers*, pp. 269-70n50.

<sup>16</sup> On the historical comments see FO No.360 China Confidential F6720/3/10, "British Policy in China", 8/1/30, FO228\4134\25 3. On the Chinese and force see, for example, Sir Owen O'Malley, *The Phantom Caravan* (London, 1954), p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> "...I don't think it pays to let these people think that one is in any sense running after them, nor does it tally with my idea of the national dignity that we should do so" Lampson to W. Selby, 15/11/28, FO800\263. See also Lampson to Chamberlain, 6/2/27, FO800\260. On the "psychological effect of



Upholding prestige was more than a rhetorical formula and populist cliché, it involved practicalities. These included the physical structures of the British establishment in China: the gunboats,<sup>18</sup> control of the CMC, and the large Legation in Beijing. This “city within a city within a city” accommodated some 2,000 people: “There is no other Legation that can compare with it; either for beauty or for dignity” claimed Lampson.<sup>19</sup> The Consulates and Consulates-General scattered throughout China fulfilled similar functions.<sup>20</sup> The *Guomindang*, however, set up their capital in Nanjing and changed Beijing’s name to Beiping to expunge associations with the corrupt Northern governments and their subjection to the foreign powers. The Legation remained in Beijing until 1935 and it is clear that despite the “practical” reasons elaborated against an earlier move the motivation was one of prestige. A new Legation would have none of the dignity nor the historical associations - of the Legation siege and the allied victory - of that in Beijing. Nanjing had also acquired humiliating overtones as a result of the Nanjing incident.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, scuttling down to the Yangzi looked uncomfortably like kowtowing to a childish Nationalist

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morale and faith in our (British) position in China” see Warren Swire’s explanation of a disagreement with Consul-General Fitzmaurice in G.W. Swire to Lampson, 4/5/29, FO228\4044\13 67b.

<sup>18</sup> Ichang No.47, 2/12/30, FO228\4190\13 22r.

<sup>19</sup> On this perception of the Customs see FO No.360, 8/1/30, enc. No.2 China Confidential F6720/3/10 “British Policy in China”, FO228\4134\25 3. On the Legation see O’Malley, *Phantom Caravan*, p. 95; Lampson to Chamberlain, 9/3/27, FO800\260; the Anglophile Dutch Minister Oudendyk felt the Legation “must make an Englishman legitimately proud of his country”, *Ways and By Ways in Diplomacy*, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Although it was hardly dignified for the Kunming Consul-General to be living in “a ramshackle Chinese house” leased in the name of the Governor’s mistress who was trying to reclaim it, H. Phillips, “Inspection of Yunnanfu Consulate-General”, 2/3/29, FO369\2705 K5497/5497/210.

<sup>21</sup> The temper of the times can also be gauged from the documents published in *CYB 1928*, pp. 723-36. In discussing the Wiltshire Regiment Case compensation dispute Lampson declared himself “shocked and surprised that [Wang Zhengting] should be so ill-judged as to use” a comparison between the two, Lampson to Nanking No.110, 15/6/29, FO228\3980\9 20k. In this case a British soldier was found guilty of killing a Chinese boy. The issue was the amount of compensation demanded by the Chinese, an amount equal to that paid out by the Chinese to the foreign victims of the Nanjing incident, “It is of course childish to compare the value of this coolie’s life to his dependants with that of a foreigner”, Teichman minute on Shanghai No.176, 10/6/29, FO228\3980\6 20k.

whim.<sup>22</sup> Any such concessions would only lead to “accentuated arrogance” on the part of the Chinese, as was the result, it was claimed, of foreign representation at the State Funeral of Sun Yatsen in Nanjing in 1929.<sup>23</sup>

Beijing was also symbolic of the Warlord years when the British had successfully handled relations with the spurious Northern governments.<sup>24</sup> A symbolic ending of this era occurred when Zhang Zoulin, whose autocracy they appreciated, evacuated Beijing in June 1928 and the diplomatic corps turned out and thanked him for protecting foreign life and property during his rule.<sup>25</sup>

Prestige was also upheld by the type of written communication to Chinese officials used by consuls. Noting that the *Chao hui* [note] was being given up in favour of *Kung han* [letters] it was pointed out by the Legation in 1930, that the *Chao hui* “bears the kind of seal that the Chinese are accustomed to associate with more or less redoubtable authority”, whereas a *Kung han* “may merely have a circular stamp... like a handy chop used by a washerman”. It would be a mistake if “anything that reminds the authorities that our Treaties are not yet abolished or fallen into desuetude

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<sup>22</sup> Lampson, “Meeting with the Spanish Ambassador”, 5/7/28, FO228\3797\5 21g. The reasons spelled out in 1930 were practical ones about moving, political instability in Central China and the heat in Nanjing, “it would clearly be mad to think of it yet”, wrote Lampson to the Foreign Office, No.143, 27/5/30, FO228\4135\1 3f. On the issue of the change from Beijing to Beiping, although approval was given for the use of “Peiping” instead of “Peking” in local communications, few consuls seem to have done so with any consistency. The Foreign Office did not intend, at that point, to use the name when communicating with the Chinese Legation in London, Orde to Lampson, FO No.1169, 16/12/29, FO228\4169\1 13g.

<sup>23</sup> See Lampson’s paraphrase of the analysis of U.S. Consul Price, to FO No.113, 24/6/29, FO228\3937\420.

<sup>24</sup> Described by one critic as “the hopeless atmosphere of fatuous-notewriting to Chinese ministers who probably don’t exist”; J.K. Swire to C.C. Scott, 19/6/25, SP ADD15.

<sup>25</sup> *NCH*, 2/6/28, p. 361; Oudendyk, *Ways and By Ways*, pp. 359-60. Lampson especially liked Zhang, “I never knew him not to keep his word, and that is distinctly unusual in China today”, Lampson Diaries, 1/6/28; on Zhang’s autocracy see Lampson to Wellesley, 7/1/27, LP I, quoted in H.E. Kane, “Sir Miles Lampson at the Peking Legation”, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, 1975), p. 95.

should be lightly abolished". Unfortunately most consuls reported the routine use of *Kung han*.<sup>26</sup>

British prestige had to be upheld in other fields. Some felt that missionaries undermined it through their vulnerability in the interior.<sup>27</sup> As has been shown consuls attempted to dissuade or prevent marriages between Chinese men and British women. Prestige was also threatened by criminal behaviour on the part of Britons in China, and by indigent Britons, on whose behalf consuls could dispense charitable funds for repatriation.<sup>28</sup> Cases of assaults by Britons on Chinese, especially by military personnel, were especially embarrassing. They were kept out of the press if possible, or resolved out of China or as quietly as was decent.<sup>29</sup> Fear of Chinese press reports harming British prestige caused R.F. Johnston to demand British press representation at the ceremony marking the rendition of Weihaiwei.<sup>30</sup> While much of this was built into the structure of treaty port life - through early socialisation and peer pressure - the establishment, of necessity, played an active role in these areas.

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<sup>26</sup> "Written Communications between Consular Officers and the Local Chinese Officials", E.S. Bennett, 6/2/30, FO228\4132\4 2h. A partial explanation of the working of this system can be found in P. D. Coates, "Documents in Chinese from the Chinese Secretary's Office, British Legation, Peking, 1861-1939", *Modern Asian Studies*, 17, 2 (1983), pp. 245-46.

<sup>27</sup> "...doubtless they are prepared to face these dangers themselves, but they embarrass us and cheapen what is left of the foreigner's prestige", Teichman, minute on Yunnanfu No.14 27/10/29, "Looting of Yung Hsing by Soldiers and Carrying off of Mr Smith", FO228\4011\2 35n.

<sup>28</sup> There were usually around ten "Distressed British Subjects" in the spaces reserved for use of the Shanghai Consulate-General at the Hanbury Institute, H. Phillips, "Inspection of Shanghai Consulate-General", 25/3/28, FO369\2018 K6379/6379/210. The Hanbury Institute was initially built as a seamen's hostel, Rev C.E. Derwent, *Shanghai: A Handbook for Travellers and Residents* (2nd edition, Shanghai, 1920), p. 62.

<sup>29</sup> For an example see Lampson Diaries 20/10/30. In March 1928 there were five outstanding cases in Shanghai including a rape case where the defendant, a British soldier, had been acquitted "to a tremendous outcry in the Chinese press", H. Phillips, "Inspection of Shanghai Consulate-General", 25/3/28, FO369\2018 K6379/6379/210. Chinese newspaper editors were requested by the SMP Special Branch to refrain from commentating on the Peters and Judd case in 1935. In Beijing British diplomats felt that it was just the type of case that could be dangerously inflamed, NARA SMP D7137, 11/12/35; for the Legation's attitudes see the file "Murder of Chinese Beggar by British Policemen", *passim*, FO676\249.

<sup>30</sup> Johnston to Lampson, 19/9/30, Weihaiwei tel. No.28, FO228\4256\153 51a.

A greater fear lay in the dangers perceived as threatening all Europeans as a result of the loss of extraterritorial rights by Germans and Russians; this was heightened by actions against Soviet Diplomats, by Zhang Zoulin in Beijing and in the aftermath of the Guangzhou revolt in December 1927, when Soviet officials were shot without trial in the streets. This was “A most unwholesome precedent”, remarked Lampson, “some day it may be the turn of others including ourselves.”<sup>31</sup> The danger of these examples was more psychological than real but was keenly felt and widely broadcast. Ill-treatment of Russians was continually reported by consuls, and thence by the Legation to the Foreign Office, to counter demands for progress on the question of extraterritoriality.<sup>32</sup>

Consular and Legation sympathies were mostly anti-*Guomindang*. This was due to its Soviet links and the anti-British assault of the previous few years. One diplomat noted in July 1928 when discussing how best to open relations with the Nationalists that: “We may have to swallow a lot of pride and prejudice to get on terms with this movement.”<sup>33</sup> There was also an ideological dislike of revolutionary

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<sup>31</sup> Minute on Canton No.209, 28/12/27, and to FO No.63 21/1/27, FO228\3777\3 2l. After all, remarked the military in Hong Kong, “Illiterates can scarcely be expected to differentiate between Russians and other white nationals”, G.O.C. South China Command Intelligence Diary 1927-12 No.CD 766/11 29/12/27, FO228\3901\1 83c. This was partly guilt, as Western diplomats connived in the Beijing action (British troops manned the Legation walls to prevent their Soviet neighbours escaping) and were involved after the fact in Guangzhou; C.M. Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, eds., *Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China 1918-1927: Papers seized in the 1927 raid* (New York, 1968), pp. 8-9; on Guangzhou see Canton No.204, 15/12/27, FO228\3728\2 2l.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Harbin No.34, 16/5/28, FO228\3777\3 14e, and Harbin No.155, 2/12/29, FO228\4073\9 84, where Eastes reported seeing “three indigent Russians being whipped in the face”. Earlier that year it was reported that Russians in Harbin had boycotted the tram service because of “the insolence of the Tram Company’s Chinese employees”, Harbin No.38, 4/4/29, FO228\4005\3 32j. In Jiujiang in 1929 the treatment meted out to a Russian customs examiner accused of taking bribes was described as “a startling illustration of the treatment from which members of nations not possessing extraterritorial rights can never expect to feel themselves safe”, Kiukiang No.37, Intelligence Report, 25/9/29, FO228\4006\6 32t.

<sup>33</sup> “...which is somewhat uncouth in its manners and habits”, he added for good measure, J.C. Sterndale-Bennett, Minute 23/7/28, “Nationalism and H.M.G.’s China Policy: Proposed Letter to C.T.Wang”, FO228\3733\41 3.

nationalism. Nevertheless Lampson went to present his credentials to Jiang Jieshi in Nanjing in December 1928, the first foreign Minister to do so, and felt that the “ceremonial caught the popular imagination” and thereby bolstered Britain’s position.<sup>34</sup> This meeting concluded what had been a prickly phase in personal relations with the Nationalist leaders. Lampson had resumed direct links in 1926 by meeting Eugene Chen in Hankou, and contacts had been continued as a result of the seizure of the Yangzi concessions in January 1927, but when the Nationalists took Beijing there were problems of protocol about who should call on whom first. This, Lampson felt, was evidence of “how excessively touchy and unsure of their position and themselves” they were. The evidence reveals as much about the British, and their view of their position in Beijing, as it does about the *Guomindang* leaders; Lampson claimed “not to be protocolic but, representing a great country, I had first to think of these things here, where National dignity counted for so much.”<sup>35</sup>

#### *Chinese characteristics and Nationalist Characteristics*

Policy discourse among these officials in China largely reflected the prevailing stereotypes of the individual Chinese character and assumed that these were static. Lampson and Chamberlain even exchanged letters in 1927 on the lessons of history for contemporary Sino-British relations.<sup>36</sup> During the years of crisis and afterwards Lampson himself was apt to lecture his colleagues in London on the

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<sup>34</sup> Legation to FO No.1620 28/12/28, FO228\3735\60 3c. This was a common idea, “formality” was “dear to the heart of the Oriental”, and the British were experts at supplying it, Canton No.19, 19/2/29, FO228\3940\29 3.

<sup>35</sup> Lampson Minute, 19/7/28, “Relations between Nationalists and Diplomatic Body in Peking”, FO228\3732\31 3.

<sup>36</sup> Chamberlain to Lampson, 16/11/27, FO No.1326 [F8314/2/10], FO228\3705\7 2.

psychology of the Chinese.<sup>37</sup> They were childish, worse, they were “scallywags”.<sup>38</sup> They were cruel and it was “always a good thing to remind the F.O. from time to time of the occurrence of such horrors [as execution by strangulation] - which strike few average Chinese as an anachronism”.<sup>39</sup> Childishness required forcefulness and scallywags needed chastisement. Sir Meyrick Hewlett “learnt ... lessons which were of real value in my subsequent relations with the Chinese”, as an assistant master at a prep-school before going to China: when to exact “obedience by firmness, when to promote loyal devotion by sympathetic understanding and the joy of sharing in innocent fun”.<sup>40</sup> The practical implication of this attitude and of the paternalistic atmosphere in which policy originated was Lampson’s insistence on a policy of “firmness with justice”.<sup>41</sup>

The surviving Legation files were written to be seen by a small group of like-minded men who lived and worked closely together. Minutes of meetings always reflected, naturally, to the advantage of the writer. It is noticeable that the Chinese were usually described as reacting in stereotyped ways - with the “usual formalities”, evasively, or “sitting up and taking notice”, and responding to lectures. This is what the reader expected to read. It was also evidence that the reporter was an “expert”, a handler - and knew the tricks, and the formulae of intercourse with the Chinese. Most

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<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Lampson to Wellesley, 11/2/27, Lampson Papers II, Quoted in Kane, “Sir Miles Lampson”, p. 39. See also *ibid.*, p. 130 Lampson to Henderson, 1/12/29.

<sup>38</sup> Lampson to Selby, 9/1/27, Lampson Papers I, Quoted Kane “Sir Miles Lampson”, pp. 39-40; for the “scallywags” comment see Lampson to Henderson, 4/11/27, FO371\12505 F9390/4382/10, quoted in Wilson, “Britain and the Kuomintang”, p. 298. Hewlett used the same term to describe Nationalist Foreign Minister Wang Zhengting, Hewlett to Lampson, S/O, 6/12/29, FO228\3935\63 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ingram Minute on Garstin to Sterndale-Bennett, S/O, 13/9/29, “Strangulation of a Chinese (Further Photos)”, FO228\4063\192 84.

<sup>40</sup> Hewlett, *Forty Years*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Lampson to Chamberlain, 26/12/26, FO800\259b. The National Government was a “Boy Scout Government” needing “someone in the capacity of Scoutmaster to keep them straight”, was one condescending judgement quoted with approval by Lampson in 1928, Minute, 19/7/28, “Relations between Nationalists and Diplomatic Body in Peking”, FO228\3732\31 3.

written archives, such as minutes of meetings and Legation minutes on incoming correspondence were written in this shared vocabulary, the discourse of characteristics; the same expectations of Chinese behaviour were shared by readers, actors and minuters. It was also a form of shorthand. Minutes also showed how British officials were able to “handle” the Chinese, and were therefore further evidence of their own superior position. Reporting Chinese self-criticism heightened the validity of these critiques.<sup>42</sup> In short these files are similar in tone to the works of the China experts.

This shorthand affected political perceptions. Nationalism was usually stereotyped rather than examined; there were the clichés of the previous 20 years of republicanism such as endemic Government corruption,<sup>43</sup> it was Boxerish xenophobia,<sup>44</sup> it was the quasi-communist child of Borodin’s gold;<sup>45</sup> and its unifying achievement was denigrated.<sup>46</sup> Many of these remarks were prompted by facts, by the mobilised anti-religious movement, by attacks on missions and mission institutions and by the evacuation of 1926-1927, (whose only parallels lay in the Boxer events), by aggressive nationalism,<sup>47</sup> by the influence of the Chinese Communist Party and the Left *Guomindang*, and the chaotic situation in China resulting from civil war. Much of it was wishful thinking: [Paul Cohen – Wusa – we are not Boxers, pp. 90-1.

We have got into the habit of thinking that this state of affairs was chronic and that when the Nationalists captured Peking they would fall

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<sup>42</sup> See Lampson to Chamberlain, 15/6/27, FO800\261, reporting the comments of Sir Shosun Chow.

<sup>43</sup> Dining with Lampson and R.F. Johnston in Weihaiwei in August 1927 Naval Commander Hamilton learnt “that Chiang Kai Shek having made his pile is now “hopping it”, Hamilton Papers, Diary, 16/8/27. For a report of a similar Chinese “self-criticism” (in this case the Northern Premier and Liang Shi-yi) see Tel to FO No.3, 3/1/28, FO228\3705\3 2.

<sup>44</sup> Teichman minute on Tsinan No.6, 17/2/28, FO228\3784\14 18; Flt. Lt. O’Gowan report enclosed in Tsinan, S/O, 7/5/28, FO228\3807\58 25L.

<sup>45</sup> Clark, “Britain and the Kuomintang”, p. 352.

<sup>46</sup> Legation to FO No.355, 12/4/28, FO228\3707\173 2.

<sup>47</sup> The authorities in Jiujiang were suspected of “a deliberate policy of making the position of foreigners in the interior as uncomfortable as possible”, Kiukiang Intelligence Report, 25/9/29, FO228\4006\6 32t.

out among themselves and the whole cycle of civil war could begin afresh.<sup>48</sup>

Much reporting then, based as it still was on these premises, especially when apparently confirmed by the renewed fighting in 1929 and 1930, was unhelpful and ultimately obstructive when it came to objectively understanding events and trends in China. The concepts resorted to relied on stereotypes which predated the Nationalist Revolution. Nationalism was often portrayed as the latest manifestation of the old problems of Chinese civilisation<sup>49</sup> and the “inherent defects - moral not intellectual - that are embedded in the Chinese character.”<sup>50</sup> Corruption, for example, was certainly a large problem in Nationalist China but the objective fact was used as confirmation of the expected, rather than seen as a new phenomenon in itself.<sup>51</sup>

Nationalist officials were stereotyped, in predictable ways, as long-haired returned-student “types”<sup>52</sup> as slothful warlords or corrupt bureaucrats. This was partly the uncomfortable and unpalatable result of consuls no longer being accorded the automatic respect that they still ideally expected from local officials; rudeness was promptly, colourfully, and repetitively reported.<sup>53</sup> What made it worse was that older

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<sup>48</sup> J.C.S. Bennett, Minute, 23/7/28, “Nationalism and H.M.G’s China Policy: Proposed Letter to C.T. Wang”, FO228\3733\41 3.

<sup>49</sup> This sometimes had the flavour of Victorian missionary denunciations: “From the springs of Chinese thought there flows through every channel into the remotest parts of the social life of China a stream of corruption and hypocrisy and selfishness polluting a soil in which not even the bravery of a savage or the natural self-sacrifice of a beast for its young can take root. This is not the field in which the seeds of national life or of any noble aspiration can germinate”, Owen O’Malley, Memo, 10/6/26 FO371\11691 F3005/3005/10, Quoted in Clark “Britain and the Kuomintang”, p. 360.

<sup>50</sup> “Memorandum respecting the Prospects of Stable Government in China”, 19/7/30, China Conf. F3981/61/10, FO228\4134\39 3.

<sup>51</sup> On Nationalist corruption see Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China Under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1974), pp. 15-20.

<sup>52</sup> The CFA at Wuhu, for example, was a “spotted and spectacled youth... supercilious”, lacking “intelligence or activity where the interests of a foreigner” were concerned, Nanking No.40, 13/8/29, FO228\3980\3 20i.

<sup>53</sup> “After the briefest of greetings, in which a scowl and a grunt were the predominant features, he threw himself sulkily into a chair...”; “Interview with Chang Tsung-Ch’ang” [Zhang Zongchang], Tsinan No.58, 30/12/29, FO228\3790\2 19f.



officials also began to adopt “unfriendly” attitudes, riding “roughshod over the foreigner”.<sup>54</sup>

Other issues were similarly obscured. Rife banditry in Fujian province in 1930 could “only be explained by the inherent characteristics of the Chinese mentality”.<sup>55</sup> Chinese soldiers were either comic-opera troopers<sup>56</sup> or else self-mutilating, fast-running, cowards; at other times they were cruel and rape-inclined.<sup>57</sup> The success of the Soviet-led NRA which impressed observers<sup>58</sup> instead of confounding such stereotypes, led to non-military observers wondering “whether there is or ever will be a “Yellow Peril”, presuming China continues on her present path of rampant militarism”. This fear was equally rooted in fictional fantasy and the example of Japan. The Legation’s Military Attaché prepared a paper on the question, largely predicated on the attributes of the Chinese character, and on that basis dismissed the notion.<sup>59</sup>

Approaches to the *Guomindang* were far from homogeneous. Hong Kong’s commentators were more extreme and reflected the colonial atmosphere there and the colonial agenda, especially its insecurity in the face of militant nationalism. Military commentators were also more extreme, partly as a result of a greater concern and

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<sup>54</sup> Mukden No.75, 23/10/29, FO228\4005\6 32h.

<sup>55</sup> These were “the lack of honesty and public spiritedness and of the essential qualities necessary to put good government into practice”, Foochow No.4, 18/2/30, FO228\4116\59 2.

<sup>56</sup> Two consuls independently sent in sarcastic accounts of military celebrations of the 1928 Double-ten celebrations, Mukden No.61, 12/10/28, FO228\3735\41 3c; Changsha S/O, 11/10/28, FO228\3735\42 3c.

<sup>57</sup> “All Chinese soldiers are liable to break loose, murder, loot, rape etc. whenever they get the chance”, “Troopers” [Brigadier Heath O.C. North China Command] Tientsin GST 5/56, 15/5/28, FO228\3785\20 18c.

<sup>58</sup> See reports in Tsingtao No.26, 29/12/27, FO228\3705\1 2, and Tientsin No.259, 18/9/28 and enc., FO228\3716\648 2.

<sup>59</sup> Chinese troops only fought well when roused to a “temporary spirit of combat” by propagandists; military training methods smacked of “make believe” that reflected “the mentality of the people”, Col G. Badham-Thornhill, “The Military Equation in China: Past and Present Manifestations”, 27/11/29, [China Conf F464/93/10 28/1/30], FO228\4059\11 83e.

practical involvement with Britain's strategic position in East Asia, and partly because of a greater professional sympathy for more forceful policies.<sup>60</sup>

### *Negotiating with Chinese Nationalism*

It is not surprising then, that negotiations were characterised - or articulated afterwards - by this awareness of Chinese characteristics and British prestige.<sup>61</sup> To a degree, of course, this was necessary; elements of "face" and Chinese customs had to be accounted for in the process of negotiation. However, by fetishising these customs the diplomats showed the wide acceptance of the idea of the handler, the expert, and his resourceful knowledge of Chinese "characteristics". Knowledge of Chinese "characteristics" gave the British certain advantages. Chinese venality could be appealed to, they could be lectured to, and so on. It was widely felt, for example, that by giving the Chinese enough "face" over topics under negotiation they would be satisfied with that alone.<sup>62</sup> The discourse of "characteristics" led then, to a certain extent, to the British establishment not being able to take Nationalist demands seriously and not considering the demands as serious aspirations or anything but attempts to reap domestic "political kudos" (or financial gain) by Nationalist officials.<sup>63</sup> This approach also encouraged a guardedness about the processes of negotiation and it became important not to allow the *Guomindang* too much opportunity for gaining such "kudos". On occasion this could lead to damaging

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<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Governor Sir Cecil Clementi's official despatches to the Colonial Office for 1928 in legation dossier 2L FO228\3728 to FO228\3731 and the Hong Kong based South China Command Intelligence Diary for the same years in dossier 83c, FO228\3901.

<sup>61</sup> By other characteristics too, in later life O'Malley referred to Eugene Chen as "a nigger from Trinidad", C. Martin Wilbur transcript, "Talk with Sir Owen O'Malley, July 20, 1962."

<sup>62</sup> On the question of tariff autonomy in 1928, for example, "it may be possible to satisfy their "face" and retain a considerable substance", Alan Archer, minute on Tariff Revision, FO No.207, 16/8/28, FO228\3843\84 41c.

problems. Lampson decided against going to Hankou in person during the negotiations in early 1927, noting it would be a mistake “from the point of view of Chinese psychology”, but his absence left O’Malley to make concessions that he bitterly criticised.<sup>64</sup>

This dominant discourse prompted suspicion about the wisdom of starting negotiations about treaty revision:

If they were perfectly normal people, one could give them concessions without an instinctive feeling that by doing so one was merely whetting their appetite for more.<sup>65</sup>

It also prompted an almost conspiratorial view of the behaviour of the *Guomindang*. The language used was that of Chinese “try ons”<sup>66</sup> (with connotations of schoolboy behaviour) and “moving in”.<sup>67</sup> The response suggested by that behaviour was firmness and “standing up for our rights” which was “the only policy that pays with the Oriental and more especially with the Far Eastern variety of the species.”<sup>68</sup> Using gunboats offensively was now largely out of the question, in fact even the effectiveness of naval reprisals against pirates was being questioned;<sup>69</sup> there were other methods: delaying progress on the Boxer Indemnity Scheme could be used as a

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<sup>63</sup> “Record of Interview with Dr J.B. Condliffe”, (IPR Research Secretary, Honolulu), to FO No.94, 20/1/28, FO228\3883\3 69.

<sup>64</sup> Lampson to Chamberlain, 11/1/27, FO800\260, Lampson Diaries, 25/2/27. In later life Lampson accepted that the rendition was the right course to take but O’Malley was still sore, 35 years later, at Lampson’s initial reaction, C. Martin Wilbur transcripts, “Talk with Sir Owen O’Malley”, “Interview with Lord Killearn, July 12, 1962”.

<sup>65</sup> Lampson to Walford Selby 15/11/28, FO800\263.

<sup>66</sup> See Lampson on Wang Zhengting, Letter to Wellesley, 26/6/29, private, FO228\4033\38 51a. The Wiltshire case was described as a “try on”, a case “so typical of the modern Chinese”, Teichman minute on Shanghai No.243, 22/8/29, FO228\3980\25 20k.

<sup>67</sup> Teichman minute, 10/10/29, on “Members of Staff of Legation and Consulates: WCP requests Particulars”, FO228\3988\3 23f1.

<sup>68</sup> Lampson to Chamberlain, 6/2/27, FO800\260.

<sup>69</sup> “Report of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Piracy in Chinese Waters, January 1929”, 330-C COS 184, FO228\4053\34 75.

chastisement, for instance.<sup>70</sup> Inconsistencies between these stereotypes and real-life could cause bewilderment. Song Ziwen was described in 1928 as “so surprisingly frank and confidential that he disarms criticism and one cannot bring oneself to say very nasty things to him.”<sup>71</sup>

The British initially hinged their reactions to Nationalist success on the Nanjing incident and their own immediately mythological versions of it. Until formally settled the incident was to block normal diplomatic relations.<sup>72</sup> Negotiations on the issue were problematical, for as far as the *Guomindang* were concerned the actual “Incident” was the naval bombardment; they also wanted the settlement to include undertakings on the British side to begin treaty revision. The issue was settled in August 1928 and the Nanjing Consulate-General made ready for re-opening.<sup>73</sup> This, however, raised other problems. At the planned ceremony marking the re-opening the British wanted pomp and a British guard of honour, and expected the Chinese to offer a guard to salute the flag.<sup>74</sup> The prospect of British troops landing in its capital city was too much for the National Government which refused permission. It showed, Lampson wrote, “that in their heart of hearts they do not repudiate the outrage”, and so there was to be no “entertainment to or by Chinese” at the opening.<sup>75</sup> The settlement did, however, clear the way for Lampson to present his diplomatic credentials in December.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Lampson to Wellesley, 26/6/29, private, FO228\4033\38 51a; for a schoolmasterly assessment of that action see Lampson to FO No.120, 28/6/29, FO228\4033\40 51a.

<sup>71</sup> “Report on Talk with T.V. Song”, H.H. Fox to Lampson, 20/11/28, FO228\3846\224 41c.

<sup>72</sup> “Pillage and murder... are hardly the kind of culture that we wish to encourage, and until some satisfaction is given to us in regard to the Nanking Incident; it seems to me idle to discuss better cultural relations” a representative of the National Government’s Education Bureau was informed by Sir Victor Wellesley, from FO No.1410, 6/12/27, FO228\3719\4 2a.

<sup>73</sup> The texts of the various settlements can be found in *CYB 1929-30*, pp. 893-901.

<sup>74</sup> Lampson Tel. to Nanking, No.125, 14/10/28, FO228\3723\189 2a.

<sup>75</sup> Lampson Tel. to Nanking, No.186, 2/11/28, FO228\3723\194 2a.

<sup>76</sup> A British vessel did not officially call at the city again until March 1929, Hewlett to Lampson S/O 24/3/29, FO228\3940\36 3.

The squabble highlights the failure of the Legation to understand the state of feelings within the Nationalist camp.<sup>77</sup> The British were, at this stage, still too responsive to, and reflective of, the feelings of the British community and trapped by their own perceptions and pride. After the settlement, and with formal recognition, a psychological fillip was given to British diplomatic dealings and it became possible to escape from the defensive hostility adopted between 1925 and 1927.

This was in marked contrast to the settlement of the May 30th incident. In 1930, five years after the event, this was officially settled with payment of \$150,000 by the SMC directly to the relatives of those killed and injured, in return for their “formal acknowledgement of receipt of this sum.”<sup>78</sup> Negotiations had been stalled for years; an initial offer of half that amount had been rejected because of the manner in which it was made. The SMC had no intention of making any gestures which evidenced “expiation” on their part, or would provide a focus for perpetuating the memory of the shooting.<sup>79</sup> When Wang Zhengting raised the issue in 1929 Lampson initially replied that it would be best to let it lie and only grudgingly were the difficulties raised by refusing the incident its “quietus” fully accepted.<sup>80</sup>

Only occasionally were the roots and motivations of revolutionary nationalism accepted as having any integrity: “All revolutions are bound to be extreme, if they weren’t then they would lose all drive so that their attitude is at least intelligible, even

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<sup>77</sup> The lack of empathy was mutual, as Wang Zhengting admitted to Hewlett about the colour guard: “their failure to do what we wanted was due to a lack of their understanding of [British] race psychology”, Nanking Tel. No.98, 8/11/28, FO228\3723\202 2a.

<sup>78</sup> Lampson to FO No.168, 11/2/30, FO228\4132\2 2f.

<sup>79</sup> Such as the hospital for the poor suggested by Yu Xiaqing and backed by Lampson, see Shanghai No.179, 15/5/29 and enclosures, FO228\3938\3 2f. The SMP scapegoats dismissed by the SMC, Everson and McEuen, were still receiving large pensions in 1939. The combined annual total was £2,000 (SMC, *Annual Report*, 1940, p. 426) so that by 1941 they had received much more than was paid out to the victims of the incident.

<sup>80</sup> Lampson, “Minute of Interview with MFA”, 20/5/29, FO228\3938\6 2f.

if unacceptable.”<sup>81</sup> In general so pervasive was the denigration of Chinese motives, ambitions and abilities, and so strong was the national solidarity enforced by treaty port life, that effective understanding of nationalism was severely hampered.

## *Part II Improving Relations*

### *Serious Dinners*

The problem of Sino-British relations in the late 1920s went further than ideological hostility: structures of relationships, patterns of trade and of formal institutional organisation were questioned. Most of these had evolved under the shadow of Britain’s informal empire and the imperialist behaviour of the British in China. Their curtailment under nationalist attack involved widespread formal and informal changes, not just those involving the *rapprochement* with the *Guomindang*. Informally, improved social intercourse with Chinese officials and personalities was vital. Lampson admitted in 1927 that “the Legation has of recent years had practically no contact of the human kind with the Chinese”. He embarked on “serious dinners for all Chinese of note” and threw a “gala show” for Zhang Zoulin.<sup>82</sup> A Sino-British Club was formed in 1928 in pursuit of this gastronomic *détente* whilst the Peking Race Club held its first joint meetings with the local Chinese club.<sup>83</sup> The real focus, of course, was now Nanjing. Here the convivial Consul-General, Sir Meyrick

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<sup>81</sup> Lampson minute on FO No.178, 19/7/28, FO228\3732\33 3.

<sup>82</sup> Lampson to Chamberlain, 9/3/27, FO800\261; Lampson Diaries, 25/2/27. A fictional account of the “gala show” can be found in Bridge, *Ginger Griffin*, pp. 334-42.

<sup>83</sup> Lampson Diaries, 12/5/28, 15/5/28, 13/11/29, 20/12/29; Lampson even dined with some Cambridge-educated “rabid nationalists” in 1927, Lampson to Chamberlain 9/3/27, FO800\260.

Hewlett, lubricated relations liberally with senior Government officials and an International Club was founded to capitalise on these improvements in early 1929.<sup>84</sup>

In Changsha Consul-General Harding was reported to be on the friendliest terms of any consul with the local officials, largely as a result of his mahjong parties.<sup>85</sup> Other consuls were less happy, R.S. Pratt in Tianjin heartily disliked the Chinese and wished to escape China and A.G. Major was “very pessimistic over conditions in China and... looking forward to retirement” in Shantou in 1928.<sup>86</sup> Such attitudes, which partly resulted from the strains of the revolutionary years, were unhelpful; so was the die-hard attitude of the able Consul Kirke.<sup>87</sup> Consuls were urged to get into closer touch with local Chinese officials<sup>88</sup> but progress was slow; in Guangzhou it was only the efforts of the Chinese CFA which brought foreigners and Chinese together.<sup>89</sup> Efforts were made to rid the Consular service in China of the die-hards, such as Sir Sidney Barton, kicked upstairs to become Minister to Abyssinia, and liabilities such as the crude and intemperate Sir James Jamieson and A.E. Eastes.<sup>90</sup> At higher levels personal relations improved to the point that, despite wide

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<sup>84</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs made over the old German Consulate to the club for a nominal rent of \$1 p. a., Wang Zhengting, the Nationalist Minister for Foreign Affairs was first president, and Hewlett the vice-president; other board members included Song Ziwen, Kong Xiangxi and Sun Fo, *NCH*, 9/2/29, p. 224, 9/3/29, p. 395, 16/3/29, p. 438. See Lampson Diaries, 7/12/28, for a description of one evening Lampson spent in this convivial company; for details of one of Hewlett’s high-level Bridge parties see Hewlett to Lampson, S/O, 10/2/29, FO228\3940\22 3.

<sup>85</sup> H. Phillips, “Inspection of Changsha Consulate-General”, 4/11/28, FO369\2021 K15557/15557/210.

<sup>86</sup> H. Phillips, “Inspection of Consulate-General in Tientsin”, 15/2/28, FO369\2019 K10346/10346/210; H. Phillips, “Inspection of Swatow Consulate”, 4/3/29, FO369\2706 K5499/5499/210; Major was criticised by British merchants for not cultivating the local Chinese, G.W. Swire to John Swire and Sons, 1/2/29, SP ADD 15. R.S. Pratt was also, like his brother Sir J.T. Pratt, the butt of racist remarks from the treaty port British, inspired by their part-Indian descent, Coates, *China Consuls*, pp. 429-30.

<sup>87</sup> H. Phillips to Edward Crowe, 15/1/28, FO369\2017 K2988/2299/210.

<sup>88</sup> H. Phillips, “Inspection of Ningpo Consulate”, 30/3/28, FO369\2018 K6294/6294/210. The Tianjin Consulate-General was “rather out of touch” with the Chinese authorities, whilst in Yingkou [Newchwang] relations were “correct, but not particularly friendly”, H. Phillips, “Inspection of Consulate-General in Tientsin”, 15/2/28, FO369\2019 K10346/10346/210; H. Phillips, “Inspection of Newchwang Consulate”, 15/9/28, FO369\2019 K10348/10348/210.

<sup>89</sup> Canton No.19, 19/2/29, FO228\3940\29 3.

<sup>90</sup> On Jamieson see Coates, *China Consuls*, pp. 453-55, 461-63; on Eastes see *ibid.*, pp. 476-69.

differences in diplomatic stance, the 1931 negotiations on extraterritoriality were conducted on a house-boat on a river near Nanjing<sup>91</sup> and Lampson's relations with Jiang Jieshi were good.<sup>92</sup> These attempts to ease social relations were also important because of the leading role consuls played in British treaty port society and the example they could set, whilst also enabling Britons and Chinese to meet. They were largely initiated by Lampson and the new career diplomats from the Foreign Office he requested, who were not men of the China establishment.<sup>93</sup> Other individuals played important local roles; Hewlett, when in Xiamen, managed to prevent the feelings of the British getting out of hand and rupturing relations with local Chinese.<sup>94</sup>

### *The Consular Service*

As well as these informal moves Lampson was aware of the need for institutional reform to improve the Consular service. It had to be made more aware of Chinese affairs and opinion. Diplomatically, as a service, it was at a disadvantage compared to the Japanese establishment with its greater resources and its readiness to resort to "devious methods."<sup>95</sup> The complacent, insular cosiness encouraged by conditions during the Warlord era was unsuitable when it came to dealing with the accelerated pace of change in Nationalist China, and was a liability in political

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<sup>91</sup> Lampson Diaries, 24/5/31.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, his comments in Lampson to Wellesley, 8/9/33, P2394/2394/150, FO395\502.

<sup>93</sup> Lampson instead requested men he had previously worked with in the Central Department of the Foreign Office, Lampson Diaries, 17/3/27.

<sup>94</sup> Hewlett, *Forty Years*, pp. 151-64.

<sup>95</sup> G. Moss, "Reports on Anti-Japanese Boycott at Foochow", Foochow No.34, 2/7/28, FO228\3726\1 2t. A good description of the better resources of the Japanese in China can be found in Douglas R. Reynolds, "Training Young China Hands: Toa Dobun Shoin and its Precursors, 1886-1945", in Duus, et al., eds., *Japanese Informal Empire in China*, pp. 210-71.



reporting.<sup>96</sup> In 1928 proposals were launched for the creation of a Special Department of Chinese Affairs at the Shanghai Consulate-General. This would interview:

Chinese officials, keep track of native public opinion as reflected in the Chinese press, and in a general way, by means of making a special study of Chinese problems and by establishing personal contact with Chinese officials and local personalities, keep [the Consul-General] in touch with the trend of Chinese activities and movements.

Anything that would help the cultivation of closer relations with the Chinese was desirable, added Lampson.<sup>97</sup> In 1930, “at this transitional phase of our relations with the Chinese”, he requested a Chinese university-educated translator for the Legation’s Chinese Secretariat to keep track of the Chinese press and official published opinion.<sup>98</sup> This should have been work for a British official but there were Treasury stringencies and a shortage of good, linguistically able staff.<sup>99</sup> The establishment of the bureaucrat-heavy National Government unleashed a flood of statistics and official publications and, despite censorship, there was a thriving press; this flood prompted the consular reforms. It is clear that this wealth of material now had to be analysed because British official observers were beginning to take a much closer interest in Chinese affairs and, in fact, took many of them seriously for the first time.

One of the first things Lampson did on arrival in China was set up a Legation committee to investigate the state of the Consular service and suggest reforms. The 1928 report recommended lowering the retirement age, redistributing the work to a smaller number of larger centres and increasing remuneration. Ostensibly the aim

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<sup>96</sup> See Teichman’s description of concession-life before 1927, *Affairs of China*, pp. 140-41. Lampson was not sorry to say farewell to the Legation’s Military Attaché in 1928 as, “being resident in Peking, he naturally gravitated very much to the Northern camp, which was in fact good business as far as it went”, but which did not go very far, and supplied the Legation with a good deal of Fengtien propaganda, Lampson Diaries, 22/8/28.

<sup>97</sup> Lampson to FO, 26/5/28, No.523, FO369\2019 K8024/6379/210.

<sup>98</sup> Lampson to FO, 8/12/30, No.1758, FO369\2188 K50/50/210.

<sup>99</sup> The standard of Chinese ability attained by the student-interpreters in Beijing was still considered unsatisfactory in 1937, D.C.M. Platt, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls Since 1825* (London, 1971), p. 188.

was to attract more and better recruits by improving conditions of service and reducing chronic promotion blockage, this would also encourage the earlier arrival of able men in important posts. The sub-text was an attempt to adapt the service to a rapidly changing China and reform the system whereby “average” men were promoted on length of service alone into the top jobs. This situation made for complacency and dissatisfaction and kept men in China who were liabilities to the service or unsuitable agents for carrying out new policies and altering old ways. Lampson tried this in specific cases, such as by passing over for promotion the “gentle and retiring” 59 year-old Consul King in 1928.<sup>100</sup>

The service had its external critics. It did serve, after all, as the Foreign Office’s first line of defence against grumblers and opponents of policy change.<sup>101</sup> G.W. Swire felt it needed reforms to improve morale and local flexibility on treaty issues. Drafting in men from outside the service for key posts was also suggested. Swire was an impatient and acidic man but his criticisms indicated a wider dissatisfaction at the ability of consuls to execute the policy changes required after 1927. Despite some improvements to the career structure and the amalgamation of the service with the general consular service in 1936 many of these problems remained unresolved.<sup>102</sup>

The service also suffered a familiar identity crisis in that it was part of the British Community. Instructions to student-interpreters going to Beijing laid most stress on the sporting accessories and social outfits needed for treaty port life, whilst

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<sup>100</sup> Lampson to FO, 24/10/28, No.1264, “Proposals for the Reorganisation of H.M. Consular Service in China”, FO369\2020 K13934/12995/210; Newton to Wellesley, No.128, 10/2/28, FO369\2017 K2299/2299/210. In both 1926 and 1934 it was commented that the service’s recruits were men from the “bottom of the examination barrel”, Coates, *China Consuls*, p. 432.

<sup>101</sup> Platt, *Cinderella Service*, p. 218.

clerical officers going to Hankou were told about the facilities at the Hankow Club and sporting life there.<sup>103</sup> Many consuls, or their relatives, married into treaty port families and all lived and worked among them.<sup>104</sup> This could cause conflicts of interest. In most ports consuls were honorary presidents of their local British Chamber of Commerce; Giles in Tianjin so far took the local merchant's point of view as to deeply offend the head of the visiting British Economic Mission in 1931.<sup>105</sup>

Consuls had to change their behaviour and the character of their responses to many issues. Rigid official stances and direct intervention, over taxation, in shipping disputes, or over the forcible occupation of mission premises began to be recognised as anachronistic,<sup>106</sup> and were also increasingly ineffective.<sup>107</sup> Forcing the issue at Wanxian had only led to a bloody and inefficient naval action, still unresolved in the early 1930s. The time for ““incidents” and teach them a lesson” is definitely past” reported Consul-General Handley-Derry, “direct co-operation” was now necessary.<sup>108</sup> It was also more in keeping with a situation where the Nationalist propagandists would exploit any British mistakes, especially given the implications of Britain's *de jure* recognition of the National Government in 1928.

### *Sinification*

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<sup>102</sup> The service needed “men and gentlemen and not mere rabbits, who can pass competitive entrance exams and spend the rest of their careers in wondering, how they can afford to live in retirement”, G.W. Swire to John Swire and Sons, 11/1/29, SP ADD 15. Platt, *Cinderella Service*, pp. 225-30.

<sup>103</sup> Legation to FO No.563, 29/5/28, “Hints for Newly Appointed Student Interpreters”, FO369\2017 K8289\3238\210. A. Veitch to W.C. Scott, 28/3/28 “Report on Conditions in Hankow affecting Clerical Officers”, FO369\2018 K6175\6175\210.

<sup>104</sup> For an indication of the network of relationships with trading, missionary and Customs families see Coates, *China Consuls*, Appendix II, “Chronological List of Members of the Chinese Consular Service”, Column V, pp. 491-547.

<sup>105</sup> Ingram to Crowe, 22/1/31, and enclosures, FO369\2189 K2877\2877\210.

<sup>106</sup> Foochow No.68, 22/12/28, “Irregular Taxation of Foreigners”, FO228\3792\1 19p.

<sup>107</sup> At Chongqing Consul Blunt was roundly told off for “instructing Shipping companies how to act, Legation Tel .to Chunking No.10, 8/4/28, FO228\3880\11 67b.

Outside the establishment proper diplomats had to come to terms with losing influence over bodies such as the Customs, Posts and Salt. The most important of these was the CMC, on foreign control of which various foreign loans were secured. It was also the service with the strongest British connections. There were two issues, control of the Inspector-Generalship [the IG] at the top, local control, and the “threat” to business practice and European jobs posed by “sinification”, or, as one Consul-General put it, “infiltration of Chinese” into the service.<sup>109</sup> The struggle between A.H.F. Edwardes and Sir Frederick Maze for the top Customs post was badly mishandled by the Legation which backed the loser, for the wrong reasons, and vilified Maze.<sup>110</sup> The articulation of the principle at stake summed up the dilemma facing this conservative establishment that was losing areas of influence and what it perceived to be the foundations of British prestige in China. Lampson angrily asked the Foreign Office if it was going to “allow a hardly fledged Chinese Government” to dismiss “for purely personal reasons a British subject who has rendered their predecessors loyal service in a position of great difficulty and responsibility.”<sup>111</sup>

In a conversation fending off Japanese interest Lampson stated that:

the Customs had been built up by British effort and was organised upon purely British lines. Behind it lay British tradition, and I did not

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<sup>108</sup> Chunking No.13a, 11/5/28, FO228\3880\43 67b.

<sup>109</sup> Hankow No.103, 14/10/29, FO228\3943\45 52. For a full treatment of the CMC in this period see Jean Aitchison “The Chinese Maritime Customs Service in the Transition from the Ch’ing to the Nationalist era: An Examination of the Relationship between a Western-style Fiscal Institution and Chinese Government in the Period before the Manchurian Incident”, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1981).

<sup>110</sup> Maze was “frankly a swine” wrote Lampson in an unsent draft of a letter to Ronald Lindsay at the Foreign Office, 10/7/29, FO228\3943\38 5a. Edwardes, the Officiating IG, was considered unsuitable for the post by the National Government because of his closure of the Guangzhou Customs during the 1925 “Shameen Incident” and because of his “devious” handling of the dispute in 1927-28. Maze was seen as free from British influence and sympathetic to nationalist aspirations and the need to reform the CMC, “Chang Fu-Yun, “Reformer of the Chinese Maritime Customs””, an oral history conducted 1976, 1979, and 1983 by Blaise C. Gaustad and Rhoda Chang, (Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1987), pp. 117, 124.

<sup>111</sup> Lampson to FO No.735, 3/7/28, FO228\3741\91 5a.

believe it would continue to function efficiently and satisfactorily under any but a British hand.<sup>112</sup>

He even sounded out Shanghai about the “means at our disposal” in case a resort to force was necessary.<sup>113</sup> The other line of objection offered was the necessity of safeguarding the service for the protection of Chinese trade and the vital role the foreign staff played in bolstering the “moral flabbiness of the Chinese mind” as represented by morally weak Chinese customs officials.<sup>114</sup> An altruistic appeal was also made to the financial needs of the National Government which, it was claimed, could only be secured by the CMC as it stood. Lampson later described his misgivings as an “instinctive mental reserve” about Chinese corruption and inefficiency.<sup>115</sup> The contradictory internal logic of this prejudice later led to complaints that Chinese customs examiners were over-diligently applying the letter of the regulations to foreign merchants, as a result of their instinctive xenophobia, whilst foreign customs officials were also “held down to strict instructions” for fear of disciplinary action.<sup>116</sup> Opposition to sinification must also have been partly motivated by the desire of consuls to protect the livelihoods of friends and relations who participated fully in the activities of their local foreign communities.<sup>117</sup>

In early 1929 steps were taken to prepare the service for sinification. Maze issued a circular stressing that it was “natural” that more Chinese would become eligible for the higher posts. This was partly in immediate response to Chinese staff unrest and ill-discipline, which had been widespread since 1927, but it tied in neatly

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<sup>112</sup> Minute of H.M.M. Conversation with Mr Yoshizawa, 24/1/28, FO228\3740\17 5a.

<sup>113</sup> Lampson to Barton, S/O, 1/2/28, FO228\3740\31 5a.

<sup>114</sup> “Local Chinese Commissioner of Customs anxious for return of an European”, Chungking S/O, 13/6/28. This despatch was forwarded to the Foreign Office with the principles restated in the covering letter, Lampson to Chamberlain, 14/7/28, FO228\3741\96 5a. See similar comments in Hankow No.103, 14/10/29, FO228\3943\455 5a.

<sup>115</sup> Lampson to Henderson, No.1015, 15/7/29, FO228\3943\34 5a.

<sup>116</sup> Tientsin No.20, 5/4/30, FO228\4206\3 32g.

with longer term needs. Customs officials were encouraged by Maze to improve relations with local Chinese officials, in fact to act as fellow Government servants, and the security of foreign jobs was assured. Educational opportunities for Chinese staff were improved and in March a reorganisation of the service was announced, based on the principle of equality between Chinese and foreign staff; foreigners were no longer to be recruited.<sup>118</sup> Some troublesome foreign staff were already being weeded out, such as those whose temperament “gave the Chinese real ground for the complaint of “imperialism” in the Customs service.”<sup>119</sup> Chinese tidewaiters were recruited and it was decided that customs documents should be published in Chinese as well as in English. After 1928 the annual *Service List* was no longer divided into foreign and Chinese staff sections.<sup>120</sup> Chinese started entering the higher ranks of the service in more than nominal numbers in 1928.<sup>121</sup> There were problems raised by this recruitment and promotion of Chinese. The defence given in 1926 by Aglen, for the existence of the foreign element in the service, that it had “collectively a higher standard of personal honesty than the people in whose midst we work”, was still widely felt to be pertinent.<sup>122</sup> The efficacy of appointing Chinese commissioners in

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<sup>117</sup> Foreign staff had even, for example, always served in volunteer units such as the SVC. Maze put a stop to this practice in 1926, Aitchison “The Chinese Maritime Customs Service”, p. 449.

<sup>118</sup> See the circulars dated 21/1/29, 4/2/29, and 14/3/29 in Chinese Maritime Customs, *Documents Illustrative of the Origin, Development, and Activities of the Chinese Customs Service, Volume IV - Inspector-General's Circulars, 1924-1931* (Shanghai, 1939), pp. 149, 163-65, 174-80, 187. On staff unrest in 1927 see, for example, W.R. Myers to Maze, 9/12/27, Maze Papers, Confidential Letters, Vol.18.

<sup>119</sup> This meant men like Castle in Wuhu whose faults lay in their “uncontrollable temper or their intolerant sense of personal dignity”, Edwardes to Maze, 3/1/28, Maze Papers, Confidential Letters, Vol.20. Colonel Hayley-Bell, who mishandled the 1930 Tianjin Customs Crisis largely because of his old-fashioned ways, which rendered him “unfit... for work in modern China” retired in 1931, Maze to Stephenson 20/10/30, Maze Papers, Semi-Official Letters 5; Ting Kwei Tang to Maze, 2/7/30, Maze Papers, Semi-Official Letters 4; Chinese Maritime Customs, *Chinese Maritime Customs IV. Service Series No.1 Service List, 1931* (Shanghai, 1931).

<sup>120</sup> Maze Semi-Official Letters 9, No.822, 8/6/28, and No.824, 26/7/28. Tidewaiters were the Customs officials who boarded ships, on their arrival in port, to impose Customs regulations.

<sup>121</sup> CMC, *Service List*, 1928.

<sup>122</sup> IG to Shanghai Foreign Staff Meeting, 28/3/26, Maze Papers, Confidential Letters Vol.19, Staff.

major revenue centres was questioned on these grounds; foreigners, it was believed, would not bow to local demands and pressures.<sup>123</sup>

Maze claimed all along that he intended to preserve the foreign element in the Customs and he largely succeeded.<sup>124</sup> This was partly to ingratiate himself with anyone influential and British, a characteristic habit, but it was borne out by the facts. Although control of the service and its revenues passed effectively into Chinese hands its character did remain semi-British, with enough concessions to satisfy the demands of Chinese staff and the propriety of the National Government.<sup>125</sup>

The Postal service was run by a French Co-Director General, H. Picard-Destelan, (who found it “a bore... to maintain personal relations with his Chinese colleagues”)<sup>126</sup> under a Chinese Inspector General whose post was largely nominal. Foreign staff predominated in the higher positions (and not for reasons of competence, it was claimed)<sup>127</sup> and relations with their Chinese subordinates were not felt to be good.<sup>128</sup> In 1928 Nationalist control was extended to the whole service, Picard-Destelan went, employment grades were reorganised, lower-level grades were upgraded, more higher level grades were given to Chinese, Chinese was to become the official language of the service and foreign staff below Deputy Commissioner were in future to make do with second-class passages home. Foreign staff began leaving the service in relatively high numbers and no new ones were recruited.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Maze to Dodwell, 28/3/31, Maze Papers, Semi-Official Letters 5. As for Chinese tide-waiters they were found to be too intelligent, compared to their foreign counterparts, a result of the high educational standards required for Chinese staff, and unwilling to do “dirty work”, Edwardes to Maze, 8/8/28, Maze to Edwardes, 20/8/28, Maze Papers, Semi-Official Letters 3.

<sup>124</sup> Maze Telegram, 20/1/30, Maze Confidential Letters Vol.2.

<sup>125</sup> In 1925 the service employed 1,260 foreigners and 7,144 Chinese, by 1937 these figures were 774 and 8,408 and foreign staff still held the majority of senior posts, CMC, *Service List*, 1925-1937.

<sup>126</sup> L.C. Arlington, *Through the Dragon's Eyes: Fifty Years' Experiences of a foreigner in the Chinese Government Service* (London, 1931), p. 228.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., pp. 192, 229.

<sup>129</sup> China: Ministry of Communications Directorate General of Posts, *Report on the Chinese Post Office*, 1928, pp. 1-5. In 1922 there were 122 foreign staff, by 1927 there were 101 and this figure had

Similar unsuccessful arguments were used against sinification as were heard from defenders of the foreign-run Salt Gabelle.<sup>130</sup> In all these cases the Legation and consuls attempted to preserve as much of the status quo as possible by claiming that the running of these foreign-staffed and structured services was incompatible with the loyalties of Chinese social life and individual characteristics.

### *Extraterritoriality and Reform*

The issue of extraterritoriality was the major immediate threat to the treaty port status quo. The “unequal treaties” were easy targets for *Guomindang* and Communist propaganda. The best case against reform was put forward in Sir Richard Feetham’s *Report* which concluded that extraterritoriality was vital for the continued running of the Shanghai International Settlements. Treaty port counter-propaganda against rendition was less legalistic and much cruder.<sup>131</sup> Abolition of extraterritoriality would leave Britons under the jurisdiction of Chinese police and courts when it was widely assumed that both were corrupt, unjust, and cruel, even though the British Government had accepted the competence of modern-style Chinese courts in the “January Offer”.<sup>132</sup> Historical cases which prompted the creation of the extraterritorial

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been halved by 1931, Directorate General of Posts, *Reports*, 1923-1930/31. The first bi-lingual *Report* was in 1933/34, and after 1928 the order of Staff details was reversed, Chinese numbers being given first. For a hostile account by a member of the foreign staff see IWM Boxall NWJB/8, Anon., “Essay on the Chinese Postal Service”, c.1932.

<sup>130</sup> E.W. Mead to Hussey-Freke, 30/5/28, FO228\3768\1 12c; G.E. Hubbard to Lampson, 8/6/28, FO228\3769\34 12c; Mead to Aveling, 4/6/28, FO228\3769\35 12c and Shanghai No.260, 2/10/28, FO228\3770\102 12c.

<sup>131</sup> *Report of the Hon. Mr Justice Feetham, C.M.G., to the Shanghai Municipal Council*, Part 2 (Shanghai, 1931), pp. 149-50; for propaganda see Gilbert, *Unequal Treaties*, *passim*.

<sup>132</sup> For ex-Hankow lawyer, A. Perry: “It must be borne in mind that it is merely utopian optimism to believe that Chinese Courts will not remain venal, corrupt and inefficient for many, many decades, and, in fact, unless the Oriental acquires an entirely different ratiocination, for ever”, “Memorandum for the Consideration of HM Foreign Office on the proposed setting up of machinery for the incorporation of genuine Sino-British Companies to control or operate vessels in Chinese Territorial Waters”, in FO to Legation No.478, 5/6/28, FO228\3881\55 67b. See the text of the offer in *CYB* 1928, p. 761.



system were recalled to justify its existence. Apocalyptic visions of racial revenge were conjured up on the basis of lawlessness in the interior and the Nanjing incident.<sup>133</sup> Some of the worries were sincere and the Chinese legal system was, at this point, occasionally far from legal and equally far from systematic. Opposition, however, was largely grounded in perceptions of the Chinese character and on perceptions of British prestige. To pre-empt the Foreign Office on the question of reform of extraterritoriality, Lampson ordered consuls to prepare material on Chinese judicial abuses in their districts in 1929, although few needed prompting; photographs of slow strangulation, or other executions, were always useful and passed on to London.<sup>134</sup>

In 1929 the Nationalist government requested the opening of discussions on extraterritoriality, was politely rebuffed and unilaterally declared abolition from January 1st, 1930.<sup>135</sup> There was a justified fear of losing the position completely through this creeping Chinese abolition.<sup>136</sup> Talks were held on and off until the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 led to the suspension of the process until 1943. Treaty port lore had it that its own propaganda, especially about the Thorburn case which was widely misrepresented in the press, undid the talks.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> On lawlessness see, for example, Foochow No.7, 19/2/30, FO228\4116\49 2. When Nationalist forces neared Tangshan (Hebei) in 1928 it was feared that there was “at the worst an outside possibility of massacre” of foreigners working there for the KMA, Shanghai No.115, 26/5/28 enclosing GOC to WO, No.5637, 23/5/28, FO228\3735\51 8d.

<sup>134</sup> Legation Dossier 84h, 1929, “Inhumane punishments”. The answers, as a whole, were ambiguous, but can be summed up by Blunt’s comment from Shanghai that “it is very difficult to get authentic information... but there is no doubt that such methods are used”, Shanghai No.346, 20/12/29, FO228\4073\9 84h. On the strangulation see Lampson to Mounsey S/O, 3/8/29, “The enclosed extract... may interest you - in connection with the present popular agitation here for the abolition of extrality” wrote Lampson, FO228\4062\103 84; for the photographs see Legation to FO No.1253, 30/8/29, FO228\4062\138 84.

<sup>135</sup> Wai Chiao Pu to Legation, 6/9/29, FO228\4062\173 84.

<sup>136</sup> “Notes on the effect of Unilateral Denunciation”, 7/8/29, FO228\4062\124 84.

<sup>137</sup> A.S. Henchman to J.R. Jones, 12/2/52, HSB S16.1 “Personalities and Narratives”.

Fear of Chinese xenophobia was widespread, especially as an undercurrent in the extraterritoriality negotiations; and there was always “the psychological effect of removing “the divinity that doth hedge” the foreigner” to be considered.<sup>138</sup> Without extraterritoriality, it was believed, Chinese xenophobia would be unbridled and, by implication, dangerous.<sup>139</sup> This was also the argument used to dispute the related issue of the abolition of Chinese Commissioners of Foreign Affairs through whom consuls represented British problems. Abolition would lead to direct dealings between British subjects and Chinese officials who would be “not only ignorant of western ideas and methods but deliberately obstructive where ever foreigners are concerned”.<sup>140</sup>

One longer-term worry lay in the *Guomindang*’s educational policy, its content, and in the question of control. In 1929, in response to complaints to the Foreign Office the Legation prepared a report on the use in Chinese schools of text-books which were “inculcating xenophobia.” Sun Yatsen’s *Sanminzhuyi* was felt to be purely xenophobic; one series of text-books was found to be “definitely anti-foreign in tone, eight of them essentially so because they were San Min Chu Yi”. Anti-imperialism and anti-foreignism were seen as synonyms. The evidence for the use of such books in schools was ambiguous although one consul complained that whatever text-books were or were not used the young were still taught to hate foreigners.<sup>141</sup> Objections to various Government-approved primers continued; in 1930 the Nanjing Consul-General asked the Minister of Education, Zhang Moulin if he agreed that “an

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<sup>138</sup> Foochow No.7, 19/2/30, FO228\4116\49 2.

<sup>139</sup> For example the “common Soldier is always ready to “have a pot” at a foreigner if he gets any excuse”, Shanghai No.191, 24/9/28, FO228\3826\6 32m.

<sup>140</sup> Legation to FO No.1243, 28/8/29, FO228\3938\16 2e.

<sup>141</sup> See Legation dossier 2c, 1929, *passim*., especially the replies to Legation Circular No.29 of April 23rd: “Chinese School Books”, notably Kiukiang No.23, 17/7/29, FO228\3937\3 2c.

instruction based on hatred, even if historically accurate, was harmful.”<sup>142</sup> For similar reasons the British complained about the official “humiliation days” promulgated by the National Government which, it was felt, would do nothing except stir up hatred.<sup>143</sup> In this case, again, a real understanding of the motivation and force of nationalism was obscured by the prevailing discourse about the Chinese character.

The issue had wider implications amongst the Chinese communities in the Straits Settlements and in Hong Kong where the *Guomindang* was proscribed, but where it nevertheless attempted to control Chinese education. The use of anti-British text-books in schools on colonial territory was not to be relished.<sup>144</sup>

In the conduct and language of their treaty negotiations and quotidian dealings with the National Government then, the British Legation and its consuls interpreted events and trends through their own preconceptions of often-clichéd Chinese national and individual characteristics. In the conduct of their “retreat” from a relationship based on the structures of informal empire, the understandable aim was to salvage as much as was possible from the pre-Nationalist era. This was reinforced by a need to salvage as much as was necessary to protect Britons in China from the possible cruelties and arbitrary injustices of life in what was always felt to be an unpredictable land. This clichéd unpredictability served conservative rather than informed and analytical appreciations of the situation in China.

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<sup>142</sup> Nanking No.55, 19/6/30, FO228\4130\3 2c. The debate prompted academic analyses of the “conscious” propagation of nationalism in text-books, especially after 1925 and a lack of “fair treatment of the world at large, its history and its contributions have been consciously eliminated”, Cyrus H. Peake, *Nationalism and Education in Modern China* (New York, 1932), pp. 154-55. See also V. Purcell, *Problems of Chinese Education* (London, 1936), especially the Appendix: “Analysis of Representative Chinese Textbooks”.

<sup>143</sup> Aveling to Legation, No.78, 16/9/29, FO228\3989\2 24u.

<sup>144</sup> See, for example, the files in Legation Dossier 2b 1928, FO228\3724; Legation Dossier 2b 1930, FO228\4128, and V. Purcell, *The Chinese In Malaya* (London, 1948), pp. 228-29, 231-34.

### *Part III Changing British Behaviour*

The British establishment had to balance the protection of the livelihood of its charges with the demands of revolutionary nationalism and the safety of the wider community. Many individuals were better off outside China, Sir James Jamieson, who feared assassination in Guangzhou because of his role in the Shamian incident, was moved to Tianjin and then retired, his reputation a liability.<sup>145</sup> Even after the climacteric of early 1927 the situation was still bad for many people's nerves. Individual behaviour was felt to affect and, at times, threaten the safety of whole communities. One such case was that of Customs Commissioner Castle in Wuhu in 1928, subject of a struggle for control over the customs there, or Commissioner Johnston in Nanjing.<sup>146</sup> Others were more a danger to themselves. The Deputy Customs Commissioner in Fuzhou threatened to sack his servants if they attended a May Day parade and had his house attacked by a mob in response. Two other Fuzhou foreigners caused more problems by tearing down a union banner.<sup>147</sup>

Keeping the wider communities calm was also important. In Shanghai, especially with jurisdictional disputes between the SMC, SMP and Chinese authorities, the atmosphere was often tense. In 1930, for example, an ex-Commissioner of the Police Specials was reported to have armed himself before driving on the extra-settlement roads where Chinese police road-blocks had been set up to thwart kidnappers by searching all cars. "The foreign community... are mostly

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<sup>145</sup> Coates, *China Consuls*, pp. 461-63.

<sup>146</sup> "Owing to his nervous condition I think his presence in Wuhu is a danger to everyone", Hewlett to Lampson S/O 4/1/28, FO228\3740\12 5a. Johnston was attacked by a Chinese soldier and afterwards talked "in such an unrestrained manner about his hatred for all Chinese" that the Consul-General asked for him to be moved for his own and the community's safety, Hewlett to Lampson 6/10/28, FO228\3794\3 20f. Both men left the service and China, CMC, *Service List*, 1929.

<sup>147</sup> The Legation felt that the Fuzhou foreign community was more reactionary than most, Foochow No.17 3/5/30, FO228\4263\7 55; Foochow No.34, 11/7/30, FO228\4263\14 55.

in that state of mind which considers it derogatory to foreign prestige to be ordered to do anything by a Chinese” reported the Consul-General.<sup>148</sup> In a related issue, Lampson sent all consuls a telegram instructing them to try and avoid incidents involving cars by discreetly persuading British citizens not to drive their vehicles themselves in Chinese territory, as accidents quickly became incidents.<sup>149</sup>

On less tangible issues there was the problem of restraining the Shanghai community which was apt to be swayed by die-hard activists and by the press.<sup>150</sup> In 1930 the ratepayers annual meeting was roused by a British lawyer, Ranald G. McDonald, into overthrowing a motion to increase Chinese representation on the Council.<sup>151</sup> The Consul-General panicked and suggested the forcing through of the change by the Consular Body in Shanghai and the Diplomatic Body in Beijing.<sup>152</sup> An emergency meeting was called instead and intense lobbying engaged in to warn the British community of the seriousness of the matter.<sup>153</sup> Fear of the possible Chinese reaction was the motivating force and memories of May 30th were fresh.<sup>154</sup> An

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<sup>148</sup> Shanghai No.329 2/12/30, FO228\4284\4 69h.

<sup>149</sup> Circular tel. to Consuls No.10 4/3/30, FO228\4312\172 84. These instructions were passed on to individuals by companies and councils, to the contemptuous amusement of the press, *NCH*, 25/3/30, pp. 466, 483.

<sup>150</sup> Teichman, in 1927 for example, felt that the atmosphere was “consistently inflamed by the *North China Daily News* and the Fascisti gentlemen who want to make Shanghai a free and independent city”, Minute on Shanghai No.328, 21/10/27, FO228\3677\13 69. In 1929 Green was still a source of problems in and outside the paper. At the 1929 Ratepayers Annual General Meeting he denounced the Provisional Court agreement in strong terms which were warmly received by his audience but denounced by the diplomats, *NCH*, 20/4/29, pp. 101-102; Chamberlain to Lampson, 16/5/29, FO to Shanghai No.17, FO228\4045\15 69. The following year, on the same issue, he was described by Lampson as “a public nuisance” who worked up” feeling against the SMC among the ratepayers, minute on Brenan to Lampson S/O, 27/2/30, FO228\4283\13 69b.

<sup>151</sup> SMC, *Municipal Gazette*, 17/4/30, in Shanghai No.103, 24/4/30, FO228\4283\27 69b. McDonald spurned critics of “die-hards” who believed that “foreigners out here still painted themselves with woad”, claimed that the problem lay in the absence of a sincere Chinese desire for co-operation and finished with a sizeable quotation from the Emperor Qian Long’s dismissive address to George III as proof of Chinese arrogance.

<sup>152</sup> Shanghai No.71, 17/4/30, FO228\4283\18 69b.

<sup>153</sup> Brenan to Lampson, Private, 22/4/30, FO228\4370 30b; Shanghai No.103. 18/4/30, FO228\4283\27 69b.

<sup>154</sup> “Violent agitation is likely”, warned Brenan, Shanghai No.71, 17/4/30 FO228\4283\18 69b; on Yu Xiaqing see Brenan’s telegram to Lampson, 22/4/30, FO228\4370 69b.

exceptionally large meeting of ratepayers was drummed up and the resolution passed by a bored majority before McDonald could finish a repeat speech.<sup>155</sup>

### *The Press*

The Legation's isolation, the Consular service's insularity, and the conservatism of the treaty port British caused worries in the Foreign Office and in the press about the effectiveness with which Britain's dramatic policy changes were publicised in China. (Publication of the "January Offer" on the second day of the Chinese New Year festival was a case in point).<sup>156</sup> This worry was strengthened by the aggressive die-hardness of the British treaty port press and by the sending of the SDF, which was hailed by the British community as a reversion to the policies of force and "relegated to an indefinite future the prospect of reining in the press."<sup>157</sup> Other publicity schemes were toyed with, such as a semi-official news bureau or the appointment of an information officer to the Legation, but objections to personnel and the desire to avoid the danger and embarrassment of association with die-hard propaganda kept the Foreign Office and the Legation warily distant.<sup>158</sup>

However, the English-language press in China was a prime target for reform, firstly because it was a continual catalyst of minor disputes with the Chinese authorities, and secondly because it was a short-cut to influencing the behaviour of the wider community. In 1929 British diplomats privately agreed that:

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<sup>155</sup> Shanghai No.113, 5/5/30 enc. SMC, *Municipal Gazette*, 3/5/30, FO228\4283\37.

<sup>156</sup> Mounsey Minute, "British Propaganda in China", 20/2/27, FO371\12430 F1715/1715/10.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid..

<sup>158</sup> G. Vereker to Sir A. Willert [Head of the FO News Department], 21/3/27, FO371\12430 F4684/48/10; for discussions on news management see FO395\419 *passim.*, and especially the documents dealing with Lenox Simpson's scheme, P331/57/150 *passim.*, and Lampson to Willert, 28/2/27 and enclosures, P1292/57/150. Lampson initially recommended "Close, but unofficial liaison" with the Shanghai Publicity Bureau, but Chinese complaints and the shrillness of the Bureau's propaganda turned Legation and Foreign Office officials against it, minute on Garstin to Aveling,

In the peculiar conditions of privilege still prevailing but already threatened in China, it is of special importance that the foreign controlled press should be circumspect and if possible friendly in their reference to Chinese politics and personalities.<sup>159</sup>

Chinese political opinion, for example, viewed the *North China Daily News* as an official British mouthpiece (the “kept lady of the Bund”), a claim not helped by the Foreign Office’s policy of refusing to censure the press directly for criticism of foreign governments.<sup>160</sup> This was unfortunate as the paper’s reputation for dishonesty was thoroughly deserved. It was also hostile towards British policy. O.M. Green, editor since 1911, was frequently called upon to mend his ways on both counts. In 1929 it was temporarily banned from the Chinese mails, for criticism of the *Guomindang*, and Green was advised to tone things down by the Consul-General.<sup>161</sup> Similar problems were presented by H.G.W. Woodhead and the *Peking and Tientsin Times* in Tianjin. In 1927 he was asked to “exercise discretion” in reports on the Hankou agreement and subsequent events.<sup>162</sup> At the same time journalists perceived as being pro-Nationalist were also restrained informally, if possible, whilst in early 1927 Lampson asked the Foreign Office News Department to divert press attention to the virtues of Zhang Zoulin.<sup>163</sup>

Lampson used all his influence to “get a different and better type” to replace Green, to the point of seeing the proprietor to impress on him the “need for a change of policy by the paper.” He had already received a deputation, containing Lionel

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5/10/28, FO228\3883\3 69k; Garstin to Aveling, S/O, 28/1/29, FO228\4046\2 69k; Hewlett to Lampson, 26/3/29, FO228\4046\4 69k; Lampson Minute, 8/7/29, FO228\4046\10 69k.

<sup>159</sup> Newton to Lampson, No.18, 19/4/29, FO228\3987\6 22z.

<sup>160</sup> Wellington Koo, *Memoirs* (New York, 1948), Volume 2, p. 46; *China Critic*, 23/1/30, p. 75; SMC, *Annual Report*, 1925, p. 66; P. M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British overseas publicity and propaganda 1919-1939* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 26.

<sup>161</sup> Legation dossier 22z 1929, FO228\3987, *passim*.; Lampson Minute on Shanghai No.133, 22/4/29, FO228\3987\5 22z. Privately Lampson felt that “the man is an ass”, Lampson Diaries, 19/1/30.

<sup>162</sup> Lampson Diaries, 12/10/27.

<sup>163</sup> Lampson to Wellesley, 28/6/27 and enclosures dealing with F.B. Riley, pro-Nationalist Special Correspondent of *The Times*, FO395\419 P899/57/150. The unfortunate Riley was kidnapped and killed by Chinese soldiers; “Thank God” minuted G.W. Swire in response: *The Times*, 7/10/27, p. 14,

Curtis and Swires' N.S. Brown, suggesting a better man.<sup>164</sup> In this he seems to have succeeded, at least temporarily, Green was replaced by Edwin Haward, twenty years a journalist in India and recently Information Officer at the India office.<sup>165</sup> Three years earlier Chamberlain had persuaded Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times* to seek Lampson's help in getting a correspondent for the paper to replace Green.<sup>166</sup> Whilst in January 1930 Lampson lectured Fraser of *The Times* "about the advantages of taking a somewhat more sympathetic attitude" in his messages home to the paper.<sup>167</sup>

The fear of causing Chinese public disorder through injudicious foreign collective or individual behaviour was real. The danger was two-fold: firstly the threat of civil disorder; secondly the fear that the *Guomindang* could use such an opportunity as a pretext for either unilaterally seizing the settlement or forcing an immediate agreement on the issue akin to the Chen-O'Malley pact. This insecurity was constant and called for vigilance and faster and better reactions than had been evidenced by the May 30th shootings. Better relations with Chinese community leaders were required and sought. In the case of the 1930 Ratepayers Meeting Brennan quickly arranged a meeting with Yu Xiaqing to try to head off any agitation.<sup>168</sup>

Better relations would only emerge from the sustained efforts of those in authority to set good examples to the British communities. This required, of course, such relations to have palpably successful diplomatic and commercial results.

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11/11/27, pp. 16, 23; G.W. Swire notation on BS Shanghai to JS London, 8/7/27, SP ADD 1079. On Zhang see Lampson to Willert, 29/1/27, FO395\419 F97/57/150.

<sup>164</sup> Lampson to Selby, 19/1/30, to FO No.40, FO228\4370 22L; Lampson Diaries, 18/1/30.

<sup>165</sup> *NCH*, 25/3/30, p. 464; *India Office List*, 1929. Thomas Ming-Heng Chao, *The Foreign Press in China* (Shanghai, 1931), p. 50.

<sup>166</sup> Chamberlain to Lampson, 11/4/27, FO800\260.

<sup>167</sup> Lampson Diaries, 20/1/30.

<sup>168</sup> Shanghai No.104, 22/4/30, FO228\4283\13 69. Better policing was required to back up these contacts. A Riot Squad (the Reserve Unit) was set up by the SMP after 1925 and the force was a world-leader in refining the techniques of such policework. On the innovatory Riot Squad and the Snipers Unit see W.L. Cassidy, "Shanghai Experiments", *The Police Journal*, 51, No.1 (1978), pp. 45-51.



### *The Legation and the British Community*

Privately, the diplomats admitted that the situation in the concessions had long been in need of reform. However, the inertia of the status quo had encouraged complacency on the issue until the Nationalist Revolution.<sup>169</sup> These municipal structures had not accommodated shifts in economic power in the communities, and in China generally; the SMC, for example, was described as a “dictatorial self-controlling bureaucracy” in 1929.<sup>170</sup> In fact, the concessions had never been intended to be the European quasi-colonies that many residents evidently thought they were (as opposed to residential and trading areas for foreign businesses).<sup>171</sup> Nor were they intended to be examples and schools of municipal behaviour for the Chinese, nor could they be whilst they excluded Chinese from active participation in municipal affairs and took little interest in the welfare of Chinese residents.<sup>172</sup> Nor had they been intended to allow foreign landholders to profit from Chinese tenants, who took advantage of second-hand extraterritoriality by sheltering in the concessions when political conditions prompted prudence. Defence of this profitable mechanism was an implicit theme throughout the history of the concessions, Zhenjiang, for example, was described as “a concession of absentee rent collecting land lords, the reductio ad

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<sup>169</sup> “...Every sane man must realise that all these political servitudes hitherto existing in China must gradually be done away with, I have never had any delusions on that subject; take the Concessions and settlements for example”, Lampson to Chamberlain 1/3/27, FO800\260. See also Teichman, *Affairs of China*, pp. 146-47.

<sup>170</sup> FO tel. No.169, 3/3/27, FO228\3179\64 108c; Lampson to Chamberlain, 18/3/29, China Confidential F2583/250/10, FO228\3991\21 25a.

<sup>171</sup> “They have unfortunately grown to consider themselves in the position of colonists living in a British colony, and the idea of being governed by the aliens whom they have been prone to despise is distasteful”, From FO No.41, 9/1/30, “Memorandum Respecting the Changing Conditions for British Trade with China”, G. Pelham, FO228\4297\2 67.

<sup>172</sup> For a softly self-critical exposition of this theme see Soothill, *China and England*, pp. 76-79. The Boxer Indemnity Commission declared that the municipal provision of education for Chinese in all the British concessions was “pitifully inadequate.” *Report of the Advisory Committee together with other documents respecting the China Indemnity* (Cmd.2776 China No.2 (1926)) (London, 1926), p. 136.

absurdum of the object of holding concessions in China.”<sup>173</sup> The concessions were in fact, remarked J.T. Pratt, irrelevant as far as trade was concerned.<sup>174</sup>

The implication of their imputed colonial status was that the moral rights of the British residents of the treaty ports ought somehow to be paramount, and their wishes heard.<sup>175</sup> The implication of the over-elaborate municipalisation was that financial security for landlords, bondholders and British municipal employees ought to be confirmed.<sup>176</sup> One school of thought in Shanghai, notably popularised by O.M. Green and by Huntley-Davidson of the Shanghai Publicity Bureau, was that the foreign residents had every right to demand the establishment of a free port akin to Danzig. This view was presented by Huntley-Davidson to the Foreign Office on behalf of the SMC’s British and American Councillors, and the Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce, in their “personal capacities only”, in 1929.<sup>177</sup> In fact the jurisdictional powers of the SMC within the settlement were so vague that the Legation and Foreign Office worried about actions of the Council which exposed that vagueness to Chinese criticism, and possible official or popular retaliation. It

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<sup>173</sup> Teichman minute on Chinkiang No.1, 1/3/29, FO228\3998\1 29a.

<sup>174</sup> “Memorandum Respecting the Hankow Agreement”, Confidential print, F8405\67\10, 1/11/28, FO228\3839\40 40a.

<sup>175</sup> For example, in reaction to Chamberlain’s “January Offer” one Tianjin resident remarked that “the most disquieting thing is that it is possible for His Majesty’s Government to publish these proposals without us knowing anything about it (hear, hear). Entirely over our heads!” “Minutes of a Joint Meeting of the China Association Tientsin Branch and the Tientsin British Chamber of Commerce, 7/2/27”, p. 15, Tientsin No.21, 1/3/27, FO228\3179\67 108c. Ranald G. McDonald’s rabble rousing speech against increased Chinese representation on the SMC in 1930 concluded with a plea for the ratepayers not to “wantonly” sell “our birthright”, see the minutes of the meeting, in Shanghai No.103, 24/4/30, FO228\4283\22 69b. Hugh Collar, Chairman of the BRA after 1940 put the formation of that body down to the failure of the Consular Service “to give a true reflection of the views of the average [British] resident”, *Captive in Shanghai: A Story of Internment in World War Two* (Hong Kong, 1990), p. 8.

<sup>176</sup> In an unsuccessful claim for compensation the ex-Assistant Secretary to the Hankow Municipal Council wrote that: “Had His Majesty’s Government not surrendered the British Concession at Hankow, I should certainly be holding that position still: with reasonable prospect of eventually returning with sufficient to provide for the remainder of my life”, Douglas Yates to Foreign Office 9/11/29, FO228\4230\1 40d. The Council in Hankow employed 17 foreign, predominantly British, full-time staff in 1926, Hankow No.30, 15/3/26, BMC Hankow, *Annual Report*, 1926, p. 54, FO228\3187\105 26.

appeared to the diplomats that the SMC was deciding the limits of its own powers<sup>178</sup> and that it remained ambitious for expansion. Elements in Shanghai were still trying to assert council control over the whole of the external roads areas in the 1920s and 1930s, especially in response to the Shanghai Incident of 1932.<sup>179</sup> Some much smaller communities had acquired spurious municipal structures, based on grounds unjustifiable by treaty, which they attempted to protect and legalise, the holiday resorts of Guling and Mogan Shan, for example, and Ningbo.<sup>180</sup>

By creating a council in the old British concession at Hankou that included three British members, the Chen-O'Malley agreement raised false hopes that British residents would also be allowed representation on other retroceded authorities. In Tianjin Sir James Jamieson was so surprised that he raised the issue of "most favoured Concession treatment."<sup>181</sup> In Jiujiang the British community refused to pay any taxes, except as voluntary contributions, without adequate representation. This "settler mentality" had to be disabused, as was Huntley-Davidson's at the Foreign Office. The Legation issued King's Regulations ordering the Jiujiang residents to pay

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<sup>177</sup> FO to Legation No.524, Confidential Print F2183/1374/10, 15/5/29, FO228\4045\11 69.

<sup>178</sup> Such as in the SMP raid on, and closure of, the National Government's Publicity Bureau in the Settlement in 1928, See Pratt and Mounsey's minutes on Legation to FO No.959, 9/9/28, FO371\13238 F4775/4775/10.

<sup>179</sup> See, for example, Thorne, *Limits*, p. 288, and *A Plan for the Administration of the Shanghai Area* (Shanghai, 1932), prepared by "An International Group of Shanghai Residents", which called for an autonomous Shanghai Special District combining the still self-governing French Concession, International Settlement and Municipality of Greater Shanghai but free of direct National Government control. The external roads were built, or acquired, by the SMC as a private landholder in areas outside the settlement but residents on these roads, which were policed by the SMP, were required to pay SMC rates. New road building took place as late as 1925. The establishment in 1928 of the Chinese Municipality of Greater Shanghai, which asserted its just claim to jurisdiction of these areas, marked the onset of a period of jurisdictional disputes. The history of these areas can best be found in Feetham, *Report*, Volume III, Pt. IV, pp. 1-33.

<sup>180</sup> Guling passed from the hands of its "Estate Council" to the local Chinese authorities in 1936, but not due to a lack of resistance on its part, *CYB 1936*, pp. 180-81 (where a brief history may also be found); Mogan Shan was run by the quasi-municipal Monkanshan Summer Resort Association, Crow, *Handbook for China*, p. 169, *NCH*, 18/8/24, p. 274. A Sino-Foreign Committee for the foreign area in Ningpo ceased to exist in 1927, H. Phillips, "Inspection of the Ningpo Consulate", FO369\2018 K6294/6294/210.

<sup>181</sup> Jamieson to Lampson, S/O, 28/2/27, FO228\3179\60 108c.

taxes whilst Brennan starkly told the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce that British subjects in China:

who are pursuing legitimate interests other than trade... as far as they look to support from the home country... are inevitably subordinate to the exigencies of trade.<sup>182</sup>

The exigencies of trade and of the new diplomatic relationship dictated compromise and reform in the British concessions. Impetus was also supplied by pragmatists within the communities themselves. The aim, generally, was to protect essentials but to reform where necessary and where unavoidable. Gradual reform and sinification was preferable to courting armed recovery, or other measures that would threaten British trading interests.<sup>183</sup>

### *Shanghai*

In pursuit of these mildly reformist aims, as much as in an effort to restrain treaty port opinion, the Legation, sometimes directly, but mostly through the Consul-General, attempted to influence the composition of the Shanghai Municipal Council and urge it to reform. Barton was slow about reform<sup>184</sup> but Garstin, temporarily in charge from 1928 for 18 months, was much more active.<sup>185</sup> In 1930 the new Consul-General Brennan announced that “Four out of the six British members are old personal

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<sup>182</sup> Kiukiang No.2, 18/1/28, FO228\3818\ 28c; Kiukiang No.27, 6/8/29, FO228\3997\39 28c; Chairman's report in the minutes of the British Chamber of Commerce Shanghai, Annual General Meeting, 15/4/30, Shanghai No.100, 17/4/30. FO228\4352\1 124d.

<sup>183</sup> For an exposition of this policy of “practical evolution” see Lampson's despatch to Chamberlain of 7/6/29, FO228\4045\12 69.

<sup>184</sup> “Public opinion at home will judge by concrete acts or the absence of them. It is for Shanghai to provide the concrete acts”, wrote Lampson to Consul-General Barton in the latter part of 1927. “Time is short”, he concluded. Lampson to Barton, Personal, 1/11/27, FO228\3677\15 69. See the rest of this dossier for the evidence of Barton's intransigence on the matter.

<sup>185</sup> Garstin in 1929 attempted to persuade some candidates not to stand although without success. Shanghai No.51, 23/2/29, FO228\4046\7 69b; Shanghai No.53, 25/2/29, FO228\40446\8 69b. Although loathe to repeat the exercise the following year, because of criticisms of this “plotting,” he nevertheless did so; Shanghai No.10, 3/2/30, FO228\4283\6 69b; Shanghai No.4, 2/1/30, FO228\4283\1 69b. On Lampson see TS 49, 6/2/30, FO228\4283\7 69b; SMC Chairman H.E. Arnhold

friends of mine and I think that all six will work well together and with me.”

Chairman H.E. Arnhold lost his seat, a welcome departure as the Legation felt him to be a die-hard.<sup>186</sup> More indirect methods were used to impress on the SMC the need for various policies or concessions to the Chinese whilst more progressive younger figures in the business community were courted and encouraged.<sup>187</sup>

In April 1928, with “the whole situation in China, so far at least as the foreign side is concerned, vastly improved of late”, it became necessary to think of the future.<sup>188</sup> Lampson was still quite ready on occasion to defend the treaty port British to the Far East Department at the Foreign Office:

What they are being asked to do is to prepare to sacrifice what they have built up, and hand it over sooner or later to what there is every reason to suppose will be a corrupt and incompetent administration.<sup>189</sup>

but the response was unsympathetic, what they were being asked to do was:

surely rather to adapt themselves at long last to the new conditions which they have for so long refused to recognise and to secure their present position and future prospects by embarking on a frank policy of sincere co-operation with the Chinese on a basis of equality.<sup>190</sup>  
Contact between the Shanghai community leaders and the National

Government began slowly and suspiciously in 1928 when R. Calder-Marshall, Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce, met Song Ziwen (who was dined at the Shanghai Club) and Kong Xiangzi.<sup>191</sup> Appeasement of the local Chinese community leaders began in early 1928 when three Chinese councillors were allowed on to the council. This measure had been approved in 1926, but suspended, and

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suggested Lampson should appeal to the 3 extra candidates to withdraw “on patriotic grounds”, Lampson to Legation, TS 34, 25/1/30, FO228\4283\8.

<sup>186</sup> Brenan to Lampson, S/O, 13/3/30, FO228\4283\15 69b; Lampson minute on Shanghai No.129, 20/4/29, FO228\4046\16 69b.

<sup>187</sup> Such as the Keswicks at Jardines, Lampson Diaries, 21/2/31 and 27/3/31.

<sup>188</sup> Lampson to Chamberlain, 8/4/28, FO800\262.

<sup>189</sup> Lampson to Mounsey, S/O, 4/11/27, FO228\3677\15 69.

Barton had been loathe to initiate the Consular meetings which had to be held in order to confirm constitutional change.<sup>192</sup> The measure was accompanied by provisos that the number would be increased at some point; possibly within a year promised Lampson.<sup>193</sup>

In 1929 there was pressure for a further increase. This was resisted by the foreign councillors who praised their Chinese colleagues in public but complained about them in private.<sup>194</sup> “They have some difficulty in realising... that... “there is a world elsewhere”, besides Shanghai or even China” complained the Acting Consul-General.<sup>195</sup> The Foreign Office was driven to complain that the tone of the rebuff was “injudicious” and that foreign opinion might well provoke the Chinese.<sup>196</sup> In January 1930 the non-Chinese councillors bowed to foreign and Chinese pressure, and announced the intention of the Council to propose an increase.<sup>197</sup>

There was more to the problem than municipal representation. “If only we could reach the terms of dining together and slapping one another on the back, so to speak, so many of these things become so much easier to handle” mused Lampson in 1929.<sup>198</sup> A successful International Club already existed in Qingdao and ran smoothly.<sup>199</sup> Back-slapping was not encouraged by the isolation of the British and the exclusiveness of their social structures. Shanghai’s public image was irredeemably harmed by the parks issue: the city’s Chinese residents were not allowed to use the

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<sup>190</sup> Mounsey to Lampson, S/O 18/1/28, FO228\3883\8 69. Other officials on the spot were also very critical, such as the first commander of the Shanghai Defence Force, General Duncan, Gen. J. Duncan to Lampson, S/O, 16/1/28, FO228\3804\16 25a.

<sup>191</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 28/9/28, JSS II 2/7; BS Shanghai to JS London, 26/10/28, JSS II 2/7.

<sup>192</sup> See the Correspondence in Legation Dossier 69, 1928, FO228\3779. The history of the issue of Chinese representation on the SMC can best be found in Feetham, *Report*, Volume I, pp. 113-30.

<sup>193</sup> He was speaking to Yu Xiaqing, Lampson Diaries, 13/3/28.

<sup>194</sup> Lampson to Legation, Shanghai No.13, 24/5/29, “Minute of a Meeting with Mr Arnhold”, FO228\4045\8 69.

<sup>195</sup> Garstin to Lampson, S/O, 16/6/29, FO228\4045\9 69.

<sup>196</sup> FO to Lampson, No.17, 16/5/29, FO228\4045\15 69.

<sup>197</sup> Feetham, *Report*, Volume II, p. 109.

<sup>198</sup> Lampson Diaries, 25/2/29.

settlement's municipal parks. Objectors to Chinese use had their way in 1927 but the issue was resolved, and the parks opened to ticket-buying Chinese, in 1928. Some later memoir-writers were still bitter about the decision; contemporary news reports were happier about the results.<sup>200</sup>

Encouraging people to mix socially was more difficult. Where British Clubs relied on Chinese goodwill to function, such as the Boat Club with its "Hen-Li" Regatta or the Paper Hunt Club, but instead began to meet official obstructions, limited concessions and compromises could be, and were extracted. Attempts were made to maintain racial and class taboos. N.S. Brown was instrumental getting the Paper Hunt Club to make an effort to enrol more "Chinese gentlemen riders" as a quid pro quo for the rescinding of restrictions on hunting in the countryside around Shanghai.<sup>201</sup> The Boat Club was asked, by Education Minister Wang Zhonghui, to make the regatta "less European." It took steps to "induce Chinese educational establishments locally to train for and take part in the regatta." Actual membership of the Club for Chinese was refused, because this would raise the issue of the club's mixed-bathing facilities, Chinese participation in which remained a social taboo.<sup>202</sup>

Social intercourse would only ever arise if Shanghai became the international community it symbolised itself as being, in work and at play. The Union Club of China was unsuccessful, only ever used on special and ritualistic celebrations of

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<sup>199</sup> Lampson Diaries, 4/2/28.

<sup>200</sup> Carey, *War Years at Shanghai*, p. 158; *NCH*, 9/6/28, p. 43, *NCH*, 11/8/28, p. 233. The Superintendent of Parks and Open Spaces was not all that pleased, the Bund Gardens being "overcrowded, at times with a seething mass" in summer 1928, SMC, *Annual Report*, 1928, p. 276.

<sup>201</sup> Brenan to Lampson, S/O, 30/10/30, FO228\4134\40 3 and enclosure. A list of the "gentleman riders involved" can be found in BS Shanghai to JS London, 31/10/30, SP ADD 1081. Chinese objections were based on the damage the paper hunt did to local crops. Lampson agreed with this complaint but others didn't, seeing the affair as an attempt to "further restrict the foreigner's sphere of recreation and make life less palatable for them", minute on Brenan to Lampson S/O, 30/10/30 and A.F. Aveling to C.W. Orde S/O, 20/11/30, FO228\4273\24 63.

<sup>202</sup> Ingram to Lampson S/O, 2/6/30, FO228\4285\3 69z; Brenan to Lampson, Shanghai No.150, 6/6/30, FO228\4285\4 69z.

unity.<sup>203</sup> At one stage O.M. Green was even advocating admission of Chinese to the Shanghai Club, but nothing came of this.<sup>204</sup> In 1931, in recognition of the fact that:

social contact between Chinese and foreigners is, except in a small way,  
nonexistent, and it is, indeed, somewhat difficult for foreigners and Chinese to  
meet socially

ambitious plans were floated for an International Club which would take over the premises of the Majestic Hotel. Nothing came of what one paper described as “one of the most important innovations in the social history of Shanghai.”<sup>205</sup>

Freemasonry was also a slow adaptor. An International Lodge was formed in Beijing in 1916 but this was exceptional. Some Chinese did, however, join American Lodges after the 1920s.<sup>206</sup> Early Chinese applicants to British Lodges had been discouraged, a policy that had been upheld at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>207</sup> Between 1933 and 1938 relations between other Grand Lodges and that of the Philippines were suspended, because it was felt that the Philippine Grand Lodge was allowing too many Chinese lodges to be established under its authority, after the Grand Lodge in London had refused permission to some Chinese and others to form a Lodge in Shanghai in 1930. By 1937 six Lodges had been founded. Chinese exclusion was partly explained because of Masonic belief in God, and the ceremonial use of the bible, which non-Christian Chinese would be unable to share.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *NCH*, 31/3/28, p. 534; 7/7/28, p. 18. In practice the winding-up of the Club was called for in 1931 after a series of losses due to the lack, in the main, of European interest. The Club stumbled on until 1932, at least; 4/3/30, p. 351; 1/4/30, p. 17; 31/3/31, p. 450; 5/4/32, p. 19.

<sup>204</sup> Lampson Diaries, 9/3/28.

<sup>205</sup> *NCH*, 21/7/31, p. 86 The speaker was N.L. Sparke. *NCH*, 14/7/31, p. 42. It appears that the owners of the extensive site were desperate to sell and had already been turned down by the ratepayers to whom they'd offered it as a new civic centre, SMC, *Municipal Gazette*, 6/3/31 p. 90, 13/3/31, p. 97, 15/4/31, p. 174, 22/4/31, pp. 182-86. The American Club opened its membership to Chinese in 1929 echoing the politically expedient decision of the German Club Concordia to admit Chinese members in March 1917, Huskey, “Americans in Shanghai”, p. 173; Kreissler, *L'action culturelle Allemande en Chine*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>206</sup> *Freemasonry in Northern China 1913-37*, pp. 268, 284, 287.

<sup>207</sup> C.R.J. Donnithorne, *Lodge Cosmopolitan No.428 [S.C.] Centenary Celebrations 1864-1964* (no place of publication, 1964), p. 41; Haffner, *Amoy*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>208</sup> Juan Causing, *Freemasonry in the Philippines, (1756-1965)* (Cebu City, 1969), pp. 144-56, 159-60; *Freemasonry in Northern China 1913-37*, p. 400.



The clichés of cooperation were often heard, and ritualistic get-togethers were held but in the main the cultural gaps were too great, and the Shanghai British community too large and insular; the British also constantly complained that they were “expected to do all the cooperating, and the Chinese do not do their share.”<sup>209</sup> Some progress was made at elite levels, British business leaders learned the value of friendly social intercourse with their Chinese counterparts in the 1930s, although there were still divisions. N.S. Brown provoked resentment, even “disgust”, among other Shanghailanders as a result of his “fraternization” with the Chinese.<sup>210</sup> Swires made moves to “entertain more Chinese” and recognised that there were other advantages to mixing with them: “It won’t be a case of everlasting shop with these people, who have more to talk about than the foreigners here.”<sup>211</sup> By 1937 the Bank of England’s representative in Shanghai felt progress on the issue great enough and important enough to report to his superiors.<sup>212</sup>

The SMC in 1927 issued a “Manifesto” declaring that it was “fully alive to the fact that the rapid growth of the Chinese population of Shanghai has rendered an alteration in its constitution desirable.” This had wide-ranging implications.<sup>213</sup> The Council set up an economy committee in 1927 which concluded that more could, and should, be done to employ Chinese municipal staff and to make the SMC more aware of its new Chinese electors, and its Chinese residents (who paid a majority of the rates

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<sup>209</sup> “Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Chamber of Commerce Shanghai, 1930”, p. 22, in Shanghai No.100, 17/4/30, FO228\4352\1 124d.

<sup>210</sup> Shanghai S/O, 30/10/30 and minutes, FO228\4273\27 63. It got him an “Order of the Brilliant Jade” from the National Government in 1935, FO232\45 34b.

<sup>211</sup> G.W. Swire to John Swire and Sons, 8/2/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>212</sup> “I was glad to find among the younger heads of British firms, a definite new life pro-Chinese social movement and definitely improving not only social but also economic and business relations with the Chinese”, W. Kirkpatrick “Notes for remarks to advisory committee Export Credits Guarantee Department on 2/11/37”, p. 13, BOE G1/296 31.

<sup>213</sup> SMC, *Annual Report*, 1927, pp. 66-67.

in 1927).<sup>214</sup> The printing, in Chinese, of the annual report, and a weekly summary of the *Municipal Gazette*, was begun as was a programme of translations of municipal regulations. Efforts were also made to improve the Chinese language skills of the Council's foreign employees, whose efforts had previously been nominal and poor, but which were compulsory by 1930.<sup>215</sup> In December 1930 the Council announced that no new foreign employees would be appointed, unless it was clear that the posts involved could not be "satisfactorily filled by Chinese", and Chinese cadets were appointed as engineers, health inspectors and to the fire brigade.<sup>216</sup>

Chinese education was a contentious issue, especially given its expense, but in 1931 the Council Chairman announced that "it is the duty of this Settlement to provide improved educational opportunities for the children of Chinese residents". Similar noises were made about health-provision, previously concerned mostly with the foreign population.<sup>217</sup>

The lesson of foreign and Chinese press hostility towards the SMC was that reform involved publicity and propaganda as much as anything concrete. In the face of the May 30th movement the SMC had found it necessary to publish counter propaganda in Chinese, and this had evolved into a policy of sending translations of *Municipal Gazette* items to Chinese newspapers week by week.<sup>218</sup> The Council then

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<sup>214</sup> The 1929 Economy Committee report admitted that the "employment of Chinese in the Council's service is at present inadequate", *Municipal Gazette*, 9/2/29. The Chinese ratepayers paid 5,349,927 taels (55%) as opposed to foreign contributions of 4,348,423 taels (45%), SMC, *Annual Report*, 1927, p. 78.

<sup>215</sup> SMC, *Annual Report*, 1929, p. 180; SMC, *Annual Report*, 1930, p. 324; SMC, *Annual Report*, 1931, p. 310.

<sup>216</sup> SMC, *Annual Report*, 1931, p. 328.

<sup>217</sup> SMC, *Annual Report*, 1931, p. 11, the plan was to increase expenditure annually up to a total of 16% in 1938. On the issue of health, and on restrictions on these plans as a result of financial stringency, see F.C. Jones, *Shanghai and Tientsin: with special reference to foreign interests* (London, 1940), pp. 15-18. In an incident which indicates the Chinese-language expertise of the Council's employees the Education Board, created in 1929, was termed in Chinese jiaoyubu [Education Ministry], to the outrage of local Guomindang activists. The Board was renamed the Education Committee, Henriot, *Shanghai*, pp. 232-33.

<sup>218</sup> SMC, *Annual Report*, 1925, p. 71; SMC, *Annual Report*, 1927, p. 81.

became directly involved in the Shanghai Publicity Bureau which widened this work and distributed anti-communist material in Chinese. At the close of 1927 the SMC withdrew its direct links with the Bureau, which went on to direct most of its attention to foreign opinion outside China.<sup>219</sup> In 1931 a Press Information Office, with Chinese and Japanese assistants, was started to “prevent the publication of misleading articles.” It was closed down for financial reasons in 1936, by which time foreign press coverage of China was more concerned with the Japanese and communist threats.<sup>220</sup>

The most important publicity move was the commissioning of the Feetham investigation in 1930. Sir Richard Feetham was instructed to advise the Council “with a view to assisting them in formulating some constructive plan or scheme” which would satisfy Chinese aspirations and protect business interests.<sup>221</sup> The report itself was an irrelevant restatement of the conservative case against any speedy retrocession.<sup>222</sup> Its importance was that it could be pointed to as evidence of a sincere desire on the part of the SMC to reform, especially as it was critical of many aspects of the Council’s relationship with the Chinese population. In fact the spirit of the investigation and report clashed with the spirit of the extraterritoriality negotiations then underway between Lampson and Wang Zhengting. Feetham’s sponsors and supporters felt that Shanghai should be excluded from these negotiations.<sup>223</sup> The Manchurian crisis rendered both projects obsolete.

These reforms were not as complete a surrender to sinification as they appeared. “Looking to the time when Municipal Administration of the International

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<sup>219</sup> Huntley-Davidson, “General Statement of Origin and Aims of Bureau”, Shanghai S/O, 5/10/28, FO228\3883\3 69k.

<sup>220</sup> SMC, *Annual Report*, 1931, p. 327, SMC, *Annual Report*, 1934, p. 239; SMC, *Annual Report*, 1936, p. 250.

<sup>221</sup> Feetham, *Report*, Volume I, p. 5.

Settlement would pass into Chinese hands” the Council sold off its Power department to an American company, and the Waterworks to a British company, to protect these investments and the standard of service.<sup>224</sup> It is also notable that the council’s pension list, for foreign, mainly European, staff, began to lengthen rapidly after 1925; that year there were barely fifteen pensioners, by 1939 there were 203.<sup>225</sup> In this way the “self-controlling bureaucracy” protected the interests of its staff, whilst the privatisations protected the investments of local foreign businessmen from the Chinese. Social relations at the elite level improved but for the majority of British residents there was no change. The essence of the British presence was retained.

### *Tianjin*

In other communities reform ran more smoothly. This was partly because of the greater direct control consuls had in smaller concessions.<sup>226</sup> In Tianjin the British Municipal Council in the British Concession had had a Chinese representative since 1919 and increased the number annually after 1925. In 1926 it threw open its parks to all residents, regardless of nationality.<sup>227</sup> In 1927 it decided (in Lampson’s words) to “eliminate all discriminatory provisions against the Chinese” and to appoint five Chinese councillors; new Land Regulations to that effect were drawn up in 1928, though not without some reservations, especially over the example being set to

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<sup>222</sup> Teichman, *Affairs of China*, p. 162.

<sup>223</sup> Brenan to Lampson 12/2/30, FO228\4370\84 30b.

<sup>224</sup> Shanghai No.1, 3/1/29, FO228\4047\1 69l.

<sup>225</sup> SMC, *Annual Report*, 1925, p. 324; SMC, *Annual Report*, 1939, pp. 412-14. Only in 1940 were two Chinese SMP widows added to this list, previously Chinese staff only received gratuities on retirement, SMC, *Annual Report*, 1940, p. 426.

<sup>226</sup> For example, the Tianjin Consul-General presided over the annual ratepayers meeting and had rights of veto over all decisions taken and by-laws issued, Jones, *Shanghai and Tientsin*, p. 124.

<sup>227</sup> Tientsin No.37b 2/4/27, “Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Ratepayers”, p. 2, FO228\3179\101 108c. Previously Chinese were only admitted with permits, and in effect this was intended to mean Amahs (except “quarrelsome” ones) and their European charges, British Municipal Council Tientsin, *Handbook of Municipal Regulations* (Tianjin, n.d. [c.1923]), pp. 92-93.

Shanghai.<sup>228</sup> A British advisory committee had been set up in response to Chamberlain's "January Offer" on retrocession. This body, which included the Municipal Chairman, reported various measures aimed at the "maximum of generosity, while safeguarding fundamental British interests." Retrocession negotiations did begin, with the Northern Government, and a treaty was initialled, but quietly abandoned in favour of municipal reform.<sup>229</sup> One vital concession involved increasing the number of Chinese appointed to the Council's staff. In 1930 the position of Vice-Chairman was given to the Chinese, but this was merely nominal as the Chairman had, by regulation, to be a British subject, as did anyone standing in for him. A Chinese Deputy Chief Inspector was appointed to the Police and the Sikh constables removed.<sup>230</sup> The minutes of the annual meeting of ratepayers were in future to be published in Chinese.<sup>231</sup>

This progress gratified the Legation and generally pre-empted criticism; the Chinese business community thanked the British with a celebratory dinner.<sup>232</sup> As in Shanghai this was not a complete surrender. Many ratepayers were disenfranchised at the same time to restrict the vote to the wealthier Chinese and British and, in effect, to de-politicize the more communally representative structure that was created.<sup>233</sup> Communal protection was to be achieved by reaching an accommodation with those

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<sup>228</sup> Lampson Diaries, 31/12/27. For warnings that liberal concessions in Tianjin would cause agitation in Shanghai see A.B. Lawson to C.R. Rice, 21/3/28, HSB, LOH I, 103.243 64/149, S/O Files from Shanghai.

<sup>229</sup> Tientsin No.231, 7/9/28, Vice-Consul C.G. Pelham, "Memorandum on the history of negotiations for the retrocession of the British Concession at Tientsin from February, 1927 to August 1928", FO228\3637\60 39a.

<sup>230</sup> Tientsin No.88, 14/10/30, Intelligence Report for the Six Months up to 30/9/30, FO228\4206\6 32g. By 1930 the Municipality's Deputy Electrical and Waterwork's engineers were both Chinese, Tientsin No.35, 23/6/30, FO228\4229\3 39a.

<sup>231</sup> Teichman minute on Tientsin No.35, 23/6/30, FO228\4229\3 39a. The progress was reported to the Foreign Office, to FO No.936, 4/7/30 and reprinted in Confidential Print F5177/2269/10, 16/9/30, FO228\4229\3 39a.

<sup>232</sup> A "singular contrast to Shanghai" minuted Teichman on Tientsin No.28, 9/4/29, "Sino-British Dinner", FO228\4015\3 39a.

elements of local Chinese society which mattered, in partnership with the leaders of the British community, not the community as a whole.

In this way those with the “settler” mentality were politically marginalised. However there was some resistance to the employment of Chinese, ultimately in order to protect the livelihoods of British employees. Diplomats worried that the Advisory Committee were too bellicose about the difficulty of finding suitable trained Chinese for municipal work. In 1929 to protect the British employees in case of an “unsatisfactory change in administration”, the status of higher staff grades was changed from non-pensionable to pensionable.<sup>234</sup> An ad-hoc body, the Tientsin British Committee of Information started publishing “memoranda” from 1926 onwards which largely contained propaganda, some of it quite virulent, against treaty reform.<sup>235</sup> There had also been attempts to introduce an education policy discriminating in favour of British children, but this divisive talk was discouraged “as both Britain and China are placed on a footing of absolute equality”, although these questions still continued to surface unsuccessfully.<sup>236</sup>

### *Hankou*

The Hankou British Concession had been subject to pressures for change since the Chinese took over the former German and Russian concessions as Special Administrative Districts (SADs) after the Great War. These were run by a Chinese Director and Sino-Foreign Councils of elected representatives. Points of contention

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<sup>233</sup> Jones, *Shanghai and Tientsin*, p. 123.

<sup>234</sup> A.H. George to J.W.O. Davidson, S/O, 1/8/28, FO228\3838\59 39a; Tientsin No.36, 13/5/29, Minutes of the annual meeting of ratepayers”, 17/4/29, FO228\4015\6 39a.

<sup>235</sup> The fullest collection of these can be found in the files of the RIIA, Boxes 7 and 10. For a taste of the harshness see *Memorandum No.9*, “Chinese Public Opinion”, 31/5/26.

<sup>236</sup> Tientsin No.36, 13/5/29, FO228\4015\6 39a; See the minutes of the 1930 ratepayers meeting in Tientsin No.35, FO228\4229\3 39a.

included the Hankou International Hospital (funded by the SADs and the Concession Councils) which barred Chinese, and the question of Chinese representation in the Hankou BMC as a *quid pro quo* for foreign representation in the SADs.

After a riot connected to the May 30th Incident, the British Concession authorities began planning reforms in response to the country's changing political atmosphere. Chinese residents in the small, symbolically walled-in area had to register yearly for a permit and formed a quarter of the population.<sup>237</sup> Despite some die-hard resistance, it was decided to allow two Chinese representatives on to the Council, increasing its number to six. This was the logical outcome of permitting residence, it was also felt that it was "best to work with the persons amongst whom we live" while for the Chinese representation would also have "an educative value."<sup>238</sup> At the same time the International Hospital was opened to Chinese patients in response to Chinese threats to cut off funding from the SAD's.<sup>239</sup>

This small community was attempting to secure the status quo with the minimum concessions acceptable to the local Chinese authorities. These moves were superseded by the seizure of the concession in January 1927 and by the Chen-O'Malley agreement which ratified and legalised the transfer. Under the agreement Hankou had been immediately retroceded and a municipality created to administer it, under a Chinese director and six elected councillors, three Chinese and three Britons. The Sikh constables were dismissed and a tablet commemorating the hand-over

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<sup>237</sup> The wall was not unique, the Jiujiang concession had had gates which shut it off from the Chinese city and Shamian was only approachable across a guarded bridge, Woodhead, *The Yangtze and Its Problems* (Shanghai, 1931), p. 116.

<sup>238</sup> For details and minutes of the ratepayers meeting at which this was decided see Hankow No.30, 15/3/26, FO228\3187\10526; Hankow No.6, 4/5/26, FO228\3187\121 26. The fullest description of the riot can be found in the 1926 *Annual Report* of the Council in Hankow No.30, 15/3/26, FO228\3187\105 26.

<sup>239</sup> Hankow No.58, 30/4/26, FO228\3187\120 26.

placed on the Municipal Building.<sup>240</sup> The bitter atmosphere in Hankou was not conducive to municipal success despite the concession which allowed British residents to be involved in Chinese municipal affairs, a concession they never appreciated as such, preferring to see it as a right.<sup>241</sup>

Taxation was the usual cause for complaint.<sup>242</sup> Parts of the community were apt to respond in die-hard terms about British prestige and still hankered for re-occupation by force, such as the editor of the *Central China Post* (whose attitude must have been coloured by the fact that he had been in China since the 1870s).<sup>243</sup> The behaviour of one British Councillor probably hastened the amalgamation of the SADs into the Wuhan municipality; his response was to retire to Britain.<sup>244</sup>

### *The Smaller Communities*

The smaller communities faced more immediate threats of retrocession, Zhenjiang was handed back in 1930 as were the Xiamen Concession and Weihaiwei. The process, however nobly intended and satisfactorily executed, involved taking risks with the totems and characteristics of treaty port life, risks which were well publicised by the press. The Bund at Zhenjiang was used for public executions by the

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<sup>240</sup> Hankow No.38, 14/4/28, FO228\3839\37 40a.

<sup>241</sup> H.E. Muriel's memoir of his service in the Hankow Volunteers during the 1927 occupation is a good guide to feelings afterwards. His parting gesture after being all-but forcibly disarmed by the British authorities and evacuated was a "symbolical spit into the Yangtsze", Muriel, p. 50, HSB S16.1, "Personalities and Narratives"; Legation to FO No.305, 26/2/29, FO228\4017\52 40k.

<sup>242</sup> Legation Dossier 40a 1929, *passim*, FO228\4016.

<sup>243</sup> Newton to Legation, Nanking No.4, 2/3/29, "report on a Visit to Hankow", FO228\4018\57 40k; see also the letter to the *Central China Post* from "Prestige", in Newton to Legation, Nanking S/O, 6/3/29, in FO228\4016\17 40a; the editor at this point was the 76 year old John Archibald, who had been in China as a missionary and a journalist since 1876, C. Lunt, ed., *The China Who's Who (Foreign) A Bibliographical Dictionary, 1924* (Shanghai, 1924), p. 17. Reconquest had been discussed in early 1927, *CYB* 1928, p. 751.

<sup>244</sup> Newton to Legation, Nanking No.4, 2/3/29, "report on a Visit to Hankow", FO228\4018\57 40k; Hankow No.36, 22/3/30, FO228\4230\22 40a.



Chinese and this was “undesirable from the point of view of British prestige”.<sup>245</sup> “New use for Kiukiang Bund”, drolly captioned the *North China Herald* on a front-page photograph of Nationalist troops squatting there (expressly to show their contempt for the foreigner, claimed another witness); William Sewell complained in 1928 that the Hankou Bund was “no longer a very nice place to walk as it is so unsanitary and smelly”.<sup>246</sup> The war memorial at Hankou, damaged and defaced during the takeover, was moved into the grounds of the British Consul-General.<sup>247</sup>

Elaborate preparations were made for protecting as much as possible of the structures and integrity of treaty port life, especially in these smaller communities which, unlike Shanghai or Tianjin, would have little recognisable identity after retrocession. Segregated recreational facilities were important; the Bund in the Hankou British Concession had previously been restricted to foreign use, as had the municipal school. The Chinese authorities were unwilling to continue funding the school unless it admitted Chinese pupils - so the school became a private institution funded by British and American companies.<sup>248</sup> In Jiujiang the public gardens had become part of the Kiukiang Club grounds, and the Club sold by its owners, the “foreign lotholders”, to the Kiukiang Club and Recreation Ground, a British registered company. This procedure removed the gardens from municipal control and left them open only to club members, that is, to Europeans.<sup>249</sup> When the Cheefoo

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<sup>245</sup> Hugh Tweedie, R.A.Y., “Visit to British Concession at Chinkiang, 14/3/28”, enclosure No.2 in C-in-C to Lampson, 26/3/28, FO228\3819\1 29a.

<sup>246</sup> *NCH*, 27/4/29, p. 1; caption by P. H.M-F., *The Pipeline*, 29/5/29, p. 170; Sewell, journal letter, 4/3/28, Sewell Papers PPMS 16/3.

<sup>247</sup> Hankow No.40, 23/3/29, FO228\4017\2 40e.

<sup>248</sup> Sewell, journal letter, 3/12/33, Sewell Papers PPMS 16/4; Hankow No.50, 16/5/28 enclosing Hankow No.11 to Foreign Office, 11/5/28, FO228\3840\1 40d; on the school’s funding and necessity see the letter to C.C. Knight of 24/8/28 from the Hankow British Chamber of Commerce Chairman, A.E. Marker, explaining the changes, in BS Shanghai to JS, 31/8/28, JSS II, 2/7; H. Phillips, “Inspection of Hankow Consul-General”, 4/11/28, FO369\2021 K15531/15531/210.

<sup>249</sup> Unfortunately the Club building itself was a municipal property which, under the terms of the Chen-O’Malley agreement, was to be sold to the Club’s company, this happened slowly and the Chinese

International Committee was abolished in 1930 the same protective action was suggested for the recreation grounds there. Similar measures were taken to safeguard British cemeteries from spoliation.<sup>250</sup>

On the island of Shamian in Guangzhou, plans were laid in 1929 as:

If the Council became a Sino-Foreign body as at Hankow it is feared that their controlling vote may be used to throw the Swimming Bath Club open to Chinese and other Orientals and so render it practically useless to the present white membership.

The Club leased land from the Council which in turn leased it from the Consulate. It was decided that the Council should divest itself of the lot which would be leased directly to the Club from the Consulate via a trust fund. The threat of forced assimilation was thereby removed. Similar measures were taken to protect the Public Gardens, which were to be included in the Consulate's own lot, whilst the Tennis and Football Clubs were transferred to the Shameen (Canton) Club. "It is most desirable to have all this sort of thing fixed up well ahead of any talk of rendition", minuted Teichman in 1929, "Certainly: most wise", commented Lampson.<sup>251</sup>

The dismantling and reform of the institutions of British treaty port life was patchily accomplished. This was motivated in many cases by the desire to protect the social institutions around which the British communities existed, such as clubs. It was also a result of the still dominant attitudes fostering racial segregation. Furthermore, the cemeteries, parks and memorials were symbols of imperial status, setting the British apart from the native population. That they raised obstacles to the smooth functioning of existing trade relations and the development of new ones was

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authorities attempted to seize back the building, E.W. Mills to C.F.A., 4/1/29 in Kiukiang No.1, 4/1/29 FO228\3997\2 28c; Kiukiang No.6, 8/3/29, FO228\3997\2 28c; Kiukiang tel., 29/12/28, FO228\3818\7, 28c.

<sup>250</sup> See the file on the Cheefoo Recreation Ground and Cemetery Trust in FO676\72 17b 1930. On cemeteries see, for example, the file on "Transfer of Cemetery Deeds Chinkiang", FO233\208.

not, ultimately, questioned by the more far-sighted in the British establishment.<sup>252</sup>

They raised constant diversionary disagreements which were capable of poisoning relations. The SMC attempted to give itself the appearance of functioning as a comprehensive municipal body attentive to the needs of all its inhabitants, in terms of representation, employment, health and education. The effect of a successful reform would be to deflate local demands for retrocession, or give securer grounds for postponement of it for as long as possible.

Reform was ultimately irrelevant, although it defused immediate tensions in 1927 and 1928 which may have led to stronger Nationalist demands for retrocession. In fact the Shanghai settlement's authority over its Chinese community was negligible on major issues and it is clear that the maintenance of public order was always its main priority and the determinant of reform.<sup>253</sup> After the 1932 "Shanghai Incident" the SMC became even more irrelevant, and impotent, in the face of Japanese activities.

### *Opposition to Reform: The British Residents' Association*

There was resistance from those who ultimately had most to lose from the erosion of the structures of informal empire: the employees of the concessions, the customs, and those who serviced those communities: the treaty port British. Where they could occasionally protest they would, as at the 1930 SMC ratepayers meeting, but mostly they were marginalised or, as in Tianjin, disenfranchised. They felt that

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<sup>251</sup> J.F. Brenan to Divisional Architect, H.B.M. Office of Works Shanghai, 7/1/29, Shanghai No.2, FO228\4106\1 122g; HBM Office of Works, W.E. Jones, 9/3/29, FO228\4106\2 122g; Legation minutes on Inston to Bradley, Office of Works Shanghai, 8/2/29, FO228\4106\2 122h.

<sup>252</sup> See Teichman's minute of 6/2/29 on FO228\4017\43 40k.

<sup>253</sup> See, for example, Tim Wright "Shanghai Imperialists versus Rickshaw Racketeers: The Defeat of the 1934 Rickshaw Reforms", *Modern China*, 17, No.1 (January 1991), pp. 76-111. The smaller French Concession also had problems of control, which it solved through its fluctuating relationship with organised crime, Brian G. Martin "'The Pact with the Devil': The Relationship Between the Green Gang and the French Concession Authorities 1925-1935", *Papers on Far Eastern History*, 39 (March 1989), pp. 93-125.

they were being betrayed by the diplomats and their hostility often embraced, for example, the SMC itself; sometimes directly. Supporters of a motion to allow the press into Council meetings attacked the Council's "veil of mystery and secrecy" for precisely these reasons.<sup>254</sup>

This distrust was a problem. The French Concession was run absolutely by the French Consul-General but the British were proud of the great example of municipal self-government they felt the settlement to be.<sup>255</sup> The consequence of even this limited democracy was a lack of outright control over affairs in Shanghai. Indirect control and interference was feared and resented by ordinary Britons: "Beware of any vaguely worded promises - Beware even of statement made by senior members of the Council's staff" warned the seconder of the press motion in 1930.<sup>256</sup>

Their response was to form the Shanghai British Residents' Association in 1931 (later styled the British Residents' Association of China). Prominent leaders of this organisation included Woodhead, Green and Ranald G. McDonald (apparently regarded by "the small person... as his special representative on the committee").<sup>257</sup> It was established by a mass meeting of British residents in November 1931, which was fuelled by opposition to the extraterritoriality negotiations and particularly by the outrage caused by the Thorburn case. It attracted members quickly throughout the British communities in China, and especially represented those whose employers

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<sup>254</sup> E.F. Harris, *Municipal Gazette*, 17/4/30, p. 151.

<sup>255</sup> The Council, though, was oligarchic and consistently dominated by the big firms. This caused a great deal of complacency among both ratepayers and Councillors. In 1935 only 3,900 out of a foreign population of 28,000 had a vote. Few of these bothered to vote in the elections which only ever occurred when Consular and other plotting failed to stop excess candidates standing. For example there was no election in 1927. At the notorious 1930 ratepayers meeting McDonald's rabble rousing left the councillors speechless, it: "came as a complete surprise to the Council, who were confident that there would be no serious opposition to the resolution and had made no preparation for such a contingency". They were so taken aback that none of them thought to speak against him. Jones, *Shanghai and Tientsin*, p. 7; Shanghai No.103, 22/4/30, FO228\4283\27 69b.

<sup>256</sup> G.E. Marden, *Municipal Gazette*, 17/4/30, p. 153.

<sup>257</sup> *NCH*, 7/6/32, p. 389.

discouraged or forbade political activism in the treaty ports. It opposed further concessions to the Chinese and attempted to bypass the Legation by appealing directly to parliamentary and public opinion in Britain through a full-time London office. It also attempted to influence the composition of the SMC by indicating to members which British candidates to vote for. It was, in essence, an admission of defeat and impotence by the bulk of the British community, whose interests had been “subordinated,” to the exigencies of trade and pragmatic diplomacy.<sup>258</sup> Swires, tellingly, refused to have anything to do with this desire of “the small treaty port people” to “go backwards.” The company was more concerned with “bigger national interests.”<sup>259</sup>

This was not a new phenomenon at a time of crisis. A Shanghai Property Owners Association was formed in September 1927<sup>260</sup> and in August 1927 a “Shanghai Fascisti” had been organised, to “support the authorities in the present crisis, and to act in the interests of the entire community”. There was a great rush to enroll.<sup>261</sup> It is clear, from letters and diaries, that disillusionment with the Foreign Office, Legation and business elites was thorough, and that the appeal of a paramilitary organisation tapped into the rich vein of subdued violent discontent.<sup>262</sup>

[See figure 5, following page]. So much so that Council leader Fessenden took pains

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<sup>258</sup> *NCH*, 12/11/31, p. 240; *Oriental Affairs*, April 1935, pp. 155-56. For details of the BRA’s founding and early history see the “Annual Report” for 1931, and Woodhead’s speech on extraterritoriality in NARA SMP D2961. On the fear of public activism see, for example, *NCH*, 24/11/31, p. 279; W. Bruce Lockhart lost his job in 1926 for “writing letters to the newspapers”, SMP Report, 3/11/28, in Shanghai No.256, 6/12/28, FO228\4045\3 61L. For precisely this reason most press correspondence was pseudonymous.

<sup>259</sup> G.W. Swire to J.S. Scott, 27/1/33, JSS I 3/7.

<sup>260</sup> *NCH*, 1/9/27, The membership was international, but as most property in the settlement was owned by Britons this was a nicety.

<sup>261</sup> *NCH*, 20/8/27, p. 323.

<sup>262</sup> Shanghai Detective R.M. Tinkler, for example, wildly wrote to his sister that “Locally if no action is taken soon, foreign guerillas will start terrorizing the Chinese troops and force a conclusion”, Tinkler Papers, letter to Edith, 28/3/27.

to urge great caution on the organisation for fear of incidents.<sup>263</sup> It was one of the precursors of the BRA, its leadership was mainly British, while at least one local journalist was actively involved in both.<sup>264</sup>

British resentment was also symbolised by the widespread support for the Japanese in the aftermath of the invasion of Manchuria. Japan's strong-arm actions appealed to those who felt betrayed as the British Legation oversaw the dismantling of the structure of informal empire in China. Some of the most prominent treaty port Britons, such as Woodhead, voiced such opinions.<sup>265</sup>

#### *Part IV Education and Restraint*

##### *Educating the Chinese*

The question of educating the Chinese was often raised. It was one of the clichés of the imperial relationship and the December Memorandum had specifically renounced the idea of “foreign tutelage.” In a more specific sense education was recognised as an extension of the pro-British propaganda that was seen to be needed in China.<sup>266</sup> British policy was not intended to be a policy of unconditional retreat and education was one method of minimising damage. Education also complemented efforts to improve the structures and habits of concession life.

It was widely felt that the perceived primacy of American influence in China was a direct result of the large number of Chinese students who studied in the United States. Dislike of Britain, British methods and moderation, were thought to be

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<sup>263</sup> *NCH*, 1/10/27, p. 14. It seems to have fizzled out in 1928 as the situation stabilized, but survived into the new year, *NCH*, 14/1/28, p. 53.

<sup>264</sup> Arthur de C. Sowerby, editor of the *China Journal*, and self-styled explorer, was replacement leader of the Fascisti and Committee member of the BRA, *NCH*, 14/1/28, p. 53, *NCH*, 28/12/32, p. 498.

<sup>265</sup> See, for example, the opinions recorded disapprovingly by Lampson, *Lampson Diaries*, 28/10/31; and H.G.W. Woodhead, *A Visit to Manchukuo* (Shanghai, 1932), pp. 106-107; on this point see Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise*, pp. 28-30.

instilled by the American cultural environment with its republican and democratic ideals.<sup>267</sup> The situation was also bad for trade. This view was strengthened by the widely held belief that the Chinese instinctively liked the straightforward and honest British more than other foreigners.<sup>268</sup>

The Boxer Indemnity Commission recommended a programme of scholarships for Chinese students to study in Britain, but stressed that the desired emphasis should be “more cultural than technical.”<sup>269</sup> A programme of academic exchanges and scholarships began in 1932-33.<sup>270</sup> The Federation of British Industries (FBI) and China Association also put forward a technical training scheme and their selectors were told to “pick future leaders.”<sup>271</sup> Efforts were made to improve the quality of the experience of Chinese students in Britain.<sup>272</sup> This also involved keeping in touch with them when they returned to China and employment: for this reason the Joint Committee of the China Association at Shanghai entertained the British Returned Students Union to a garden party in 1932.<sup>273</sup> The widespread personal bias against the Westernised students may well have remained, but it was no longer politically expedient and grew increasingly anachronistic. In 1934 a Sino-British

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<sup>266</sup> See enclosure No.10, “War with China” in C-in-C (China), China Station General Letter No.3, 11/3/27, ADM\116\2509 MO1165/27.

<sup>267</sup> See, for example, *Eastern Engineering*, 12/7/28, p. 173, “Opportunities in China”; and Hong Kong University Chancellor W.H. Hornell’s comments quoted in CHAS/MCP/35 Papers Circulated, 5/7/28. Britain was recommended in preference to the United States by the Joseph Bailie, as it was easier to get long-term work-placements there, *NCH*, 23/2/29, p. 310.

<sup>268</sup> For example see Hugh Tweedie, R.A.Y., to First Sea Lord, 21/6/29, FO228\3961\42 10q.

<sup>269</sup> *Report of the Advisory Committee... respecting the China Indemnity*, pp. 22, 151. The “China Indemnity (Application) Act”, was first announced in 1922 and passed into law in 1925. It allowed for receipts collected after 1922 to be used for educational or other purposes “beneficial to the mutual interests” of Britain and China. *ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>270</sup> *Report of the Executive Council of the Universities’ China Committee in London for 1932-33*, pp. 2-6.

<sup>271</sup> Sir Frank Gill “The Chinese Engineering Apprentice and the Federation of British Industries”, UCC, *Annual Proceedings, 1942-43*, p. 27.

<sup>272</sup> A China Institute was set up in London to provide a focus for Chinese students, who also had a full-time adviser, UCC, *Report 1933-34*, p. 9.

<sup>273</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Joint Committee Shanghai, 19/9/32, CHAS/MCP/37.

Cultural Association was formed in Nanjing with a similar educational purpose, Lampson became its Honorary President although there were no Foreign Office funds available for such initiatives.<sup>274</sup>

Hong Kong University was, theoretically, a more cost-effective way of inculcating such cultural influence, (Clementi described it as “a most valuable asset of the British Empire in the Far East”).<sup>275</sup> However, according to its former Chancellor mainland Chinese students apparently resented discriminatory treatment in the colonial atmosphere of Hong Kong, such as being pushed off the pavements, whilst British firms in China were wary of employing the university’s graduates. They were too bookish, and too many of them were Straits Chinese and not, therefore, “gentleman’s sons.”<sup>276</sup> It had yet to live up to its potential. The British educational effort in China was often lauded for fostering the “English public school spirit” there; however, as most British Public Schools in China continued to exclude Chinese pupils, this was an unreliable source of influence.<sup>277</sup>

Much of this educational debate remained theoretical, however, as financial constraints were strong. By 1939 only 58 students had arrived on the FBI scheme; between 1925 and 1931 an estimated 5,700 Chinese students went to study in the

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<sup>274</sup> NCH, 18/10/33, p. 81, 13/6/34, p. 384; “Sino-British Cultural Association: Memorandum on Progress up to June 1935”, FO395\530 P2383/1134/150; FO Minute, 2/4/35, FO395\530 P1134/1134/150.

<sup>275</sup> Hong Kong Despatch No.11, 22/130, enc.4, FO228\4252\1 50g.

<sup>276</sup> C. Eliot to Chamberlain, 19/6/25, FO800\258; See an attempt to improve the perception of HKU Engineering graduates by their Professor, C.A. Middleton-Smith, ““Practical Chinese Engineers”: The Demand and the Supply”, *Far Eastern Review*, July 1930, pp. 344-48; JS London to BS Hong Kong, 25/2/27, SP ADD 1079.

<sup>277</sup> The school described was the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, Tientsin No.54, 24/7/29, FO228\4032\2 50n. In the week following the May 30th incident a committee of Old Etonians appealed through *The Times* for funds for “An Eton for China”. This, it was claimed, was the only alternative policy to using “blood and iron” against the “Chinese peril”, *The Times*, 4/6/25, p. 13e; see also the *Report of the Advisory Committee... respecting the China Indemnity*, p. 178. For a survey of British educational establishments in China see NCH, 24/10/25, p. 175.



United States.<sup>278</sup> A Sino-British Cultural Association was set up in Nanjing in 1933 to facilitate academic and cultural links but there were to be no funds from the Government.<sup>279</sup> Efforts were made to push specific cases, such as the education of Zhang Xueliang's son.<sup>280</sup>

The issue of education was closely allied to that of British advisors to China. The British Naval Advisor of 1931-1933 certainly felt that his chief duty was to alleviate British unemployment by selling battleships, but he also constantly stressed the value of British training for Chinese Naval Officers; as far as the Legation was concerned his chief duty was to prevent any other nation filching the position.<sup>281</sup> This was an extension of the perceived need for closer personal relations. There was no proof that foreign advisors were influential or that they at all strengthened the position of their home nation in the eyes of the National Government.<sup>282</sup> They did, however, provide a channel through which personal relations could be further eased. Sir Frederick Whyte, advisor from 1929 to 1931, had originally been sent out to China by an ad-hoc consortium of firms with China interests and these links were maintained, albeit informally, when he became advisor. When G.W. Swire visited China in 1929, he was advised to see Nationalist ministers such as Song Ziwen, Kong Xiangxi and Wang Zhengting and businessmen such as Chen Guangfu, Xu Xinliu and Li Ming,

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<sup>278</sup> Gill, "The Chinese Engineering Apprentice", UCC, *Annual Proceedings 1942-43*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>279</sup> *NCH*, 18/10/33 pp. 81, 88. The more immediate priority was to counter German and Italian anti-British propaganda, see Taylor, *Projection of Britain*, *passim*.

<sup>280</sup> Lampson to Mounsey, No.150, 26/10/28, and enclosure, Mukden No.60, 11/10/28, FO228\3861\1 50h.

<sup>281</sup> Bailie-Grohman Papers, Autobiography Part 2, pp. 63, 93, GRO/33; "Training of Chinese Officers in the Royal Navy", GRO/14.

<sup>282</sup> Sir Meyrick Hewlett was allowed to retire early from the consular service to become an advisor to Jiang jieshi but once installed he was never used and left China in disappointment, *Forty Years*, pp. 248-49.

and to arrange these meetings through Whyte.<sup>283</sup> Britain's share of advisers was not large and only the Leith-Ross mission in 1935-6 had any major influence.<sup>284</sup>

### *Educating the British*

If Chinese students feared that they would be shoved off the pavements in colonial Hong Kong it seemed that it would make more sense in the first instance to change the behaviour of those shoving them. Meeting returned students at garden parties in Shanghai would be a wasted effort if Britons were still encouraged by the dominant forces of socialisation to have no real social contacts with Chinese.

It was widely acknowledged in British commercial and diplomatic circles that, for reasons of politesse, trade and pragmatism, there was a need to change social behaviour. In response to this the Department of Overseas Trade published a pamphlet for young businessmen in 1934. In June 1932 Louis Beale, Commercial Counsellor at Shanghai, wrote to Sir Edward Crowe at the DOT about the then missionary E.R. Hughes who "while in England on leave intends to spend some time exploring the possibilities of closer intimacy between Shanghai British and Chinese." Hughes was encouraged in this by N.S. Brown and by G.E. Hubbard, political agent of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, who had prepared a memo describing "a somewhat nebulous project for the inculcating into younger minds of a somewhat better conception of, and attitude towards, the Chinese and China."<sup>285</sup> Various approaches were suggested.<sup>286</sup> Beale favoured a handbook of some sort and thought

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<sup>283</sup> On Whyte's funding see Orde to Lampson S/O, 23/12/29, FO228\4135\1 3h and the Indo-China Steam Navigation Co. file in SP ADD 1185; H.W. Robertson to G.W. Swire, 11/1/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>284</sup> On Leith-Ross see Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise*, pp. 102-49; Whyte ruined his career through adultery but W.H. Donald maintained a close relationship with Jiang Jieshi until his death in 1945, Maze to Stephenson, 20/10/30, Maze Papers, Confidential Letters Vol.5, and NARA SMP D5265; Earl Albert Selle, *Donald of China* (Sydney, 1948), *passim*.

<sup>285</sup> Beale to Crowe, Private, 13/6/32, BT 60/31/5.

<sup>286</sup> "Memorandum by Mr G.E. Hubbard", pp. 2-3, BT 60/31/5/1.

the project vital for British trade. Hughes' dislike of British treaty port behaviour has already been noted.<sup>287</sup>

Whatever the aim, the DOT was favourable and anxious that any document would be under their control "in order to prevent any tendency to go the other extreme, namely, one of sentiment, overlooking the realities of certain Chinese delinquencies."<sup>288</sup> Sir John Pratt at the Foreign Office, always a critic of treaty port ignorance, was enthusiastic.<sup>289</sup> An unofficial committee of academics and businessmen was brought together and their reaction was generally favourable.

Leefe, for Mathesons, identified the problem as:

a tendency for youngsters arriving out in China to be either entirely unreceptive of the point of view of the native and to condemn every overture by them as requiring either an ignominious kowtow from us -... - or else to go the other extreme and in an impulsive effort to get a reputation for breadth of mind and condemn the institutions of their own country.<sup>290</sup>

A meeting was held at the DOT in September which included the usual China worthies.<sup>291</sup> Two things came of this, an offer from Sir Denison Ross, at the School of Oriental Studies to run "Special Courses of Study for Commercial Students" and instructions to Consul A.G.N. Ogden to write a pamphlet.<sup>292</sup> Not much came of the Denison Ross proposal although BAT and Swires sent a steady flow of people to the School after the mid-1930s.<sup>293</sup> Whether the special courses would have produced Hughes' gentlemen is open to question.

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<sup>287</sup> Hughes to Crowe, 15/12/32, BT 60/31/5/65.

<sup>288</sup> Farrer Minute, 6/7/32, BT 60/31/5/1.

<sup>289</sup> Pratt, *War and Politics*, pp. 19-20; see his minute in BT 60/31/5/1-5.

<sup>290</sup> Leefe to Crowe, 29/8/32, BT 60/31/5/18.

<sup>291</sup> Including Crowe, Sir Charles Addis, Arthur Balfour, Robert Waley Cohen, Hughes, Gull, Stanley Dodwell and Pratt: "Minutes of a Meeting Held at the Department of Overseas Trade in 13th September 1932 to Discuss Anglo-Chinese Relations", BT 60/31/5/35.

<sup>292</sup> Sir E. Denison Ross to Crowe, 14/11/32; BT 60/31/5/70a, 1/2/33, BT 60/31/5/59a.

<sup>293</sup> 12 from BAT and 18 from Swires were registered from 1934 to 1936: SOS, *Annual Reports*, 1934-35 to 1937-38, SOAS CHAS S.I.3.

The booklet was quite good. Ogden's original text was fair but needed toning down to avoid unhelpful comments about the "ingrained" propensity of the Chinese to "squeeze" and lamentations about the declining "general standard of commercial morality" among Chinese businessmen.<sup>294</sup> A single pamphlet, despite all the sound and fury, was unlikely to affect things too greatly, but the realisation of its necessity was indicative of the shift in progress, in the attitudes of influential Britons. It compares very favourably, in its evaluation of the Chinese character and its bibliographical suggestions, with the 1928 War Office Pamphlet *Notes on Shanghai*.<sup>295</sup>

### *Conclusion*

It is clear that the relationship of the British establishment in China with the *Guomindang* was affected by, and to some extent, especially in the early days, actively hindered by, received notions of the Chinese character. Political reporting and analysis were seriously affected by this, by the structures of treaty port life and the plurality of social factors which contributed to the discourse.

The British establishment, particularly individuals such as Lampson, Brown and Hughes, made significant efforts to reform; compromising and liberalising as far as was practical and its personnel were able. It also had some later doubts as to the wisdom of its earlier shrill opposition to the *Guomindang*.<sup>296</sup> But it would only reform on its own contradictory terms - these involved both conscious and unconscious loyalty to the British community on many basic and "instinctive" issues, together with

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<sup>294</sup> "Notes", draft, Paras. 19, 17, BT 60/31/5/70a.

<sup>295</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>296</sup> Lampson admitted in 1928 that an earlier resumption of contact with the *Guomindang* might well have defused tensions and eased relations, "Annual Report on China 1927", p. 3, to FO No.102, 30/1/28, FO228\3921\1 109.

a sense of Empire and its dignity. Purging unsuitable personnel was sensible and did bring some benefits. Younger and more progressive businessmen were encouraged by the Legation, younger men encouraged too within the Consular service to replace those whose experience had made them conservative or cynical, and those who had identified themselves too closely with the interests of the British community. The new emphasis was on objectively protecting those interests within Chinese law and the context of diplomatic policy.

The institutional structures reformed in and after 1927 had upheld and strengthened the insularity of the British treaty port community, and also left it vulnerable to criticism and attack. The public privileges British and other foreign residents reserved for themselves (parks, representation, employment), were easy targets for the mobilisation of discontent and political opposition as were the more obvious colonial trappings, such as Sikh policemen. They also made it difficult for the treaty port British to understand the nature of their own position in China and their own obstructive irrelevance when it came to changing patterns of trade. “Prestige”, too, was an impediment to trade - in the responses with which it encouraged, and in the attitudes it bred. It functioned not just as a determinant of relative standing but was also important to the self-esteem of representatives of an empire which could no longer rely on defending itself militarily. The Chinese world-view was still fiercely Sino-centric and it is not surprising that the British were sensitive about their prestige, the limits of their strength had been fully exposed in China.

It is clear that the British establishment was piqued and bewildered that its liberal protestations and concessions were not widely believed by the Chinese. Lampson found it perverse that one group of nationalists he talked to in 1927 “simply

could not believe that our policy was as liberal and conciliatory as I explained.”<sup>297</sup>

Wang Zhengting was driven to note in 1928 that “the liberalism which you claim to be characteristic of your race never takes concrete form except under direct pressure from those who expect to benefit from it.”<sup>298</sup> This British reaction shows how the motivations and implications of Chinese nationalism were not at all well understood or appreciated. It is also related to an almost obsessive desire to be liked and to be thought fair (hence Lampson’s “justice with firmness”) which was an aspect of the imperial mentality and of the thriving legacy of condescension rooted in the period of informal empire.

Much of this reform was nominal and at elite levels. Social and cultural relations between the British and the Chinese were now seen to exist whereas before they had been mostly ceremonial. The work of the UCC or the effect of the Nanjing International Club was small in scale but rich in symbolism and example. Consul Stark-Toller returned from secondment to the Foreign Office Far East Department to Chungking and announced that:

I don’t think one would get very far out here by taking a rigid stand on legal principles and treaties... Liu Hsiang’s Chief of Staff... said “I don’t know anything about the treaties, but I’ll do anything you want for the sake of friendship.”<sup>299</sup>

This statement says as much about the evolving discourse that informed his work as it does about local conditions in Sichuan. Johnston at Weihaiwei had feared that retrocession there would contribute to another discourse and the:

creation of a legend that the inhabitants of the Territory, having been ground under a merciless foreign yoke for over thirty years, had welcomed their liberators with tears of joy,

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<sup>297</sup> Lampson to Chamberlain, 9/3/27, FO800\260.

<sup>298</sup> Aveling to Lampson S/O, 4/8/28, FO228\3941\64 3.

<sup>299</sup> W. Stark-Toller to C.W. Orde, 17/2/31, FO800\389.

and that the “liberators” would remove all traces of the British past.<sup>300</sup> The avoidance of such extinction, and complete loss of influence, was as important a factor in the reform of the structures and attitudes of the British establishment in China as practical necessity.

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<sup>300</sup> Weihaiwei No.8, 18/2/30, FO228\4253\46 51a.

## Chapter 5

### BAYONETS INTO SHARES

#### Introduction: British Businesses and Revolutionary Nationalism

Ross (Jardine's Agent) dined with me, the usual subject of what policy to pursue came up. Old Ross, who has been in this country for ages remarked "We've always Traded at the point of the Bayonet, and we shall have to go on doing it, or clear out altogether. These people require to be taught a lesson about every ten years!"<sup>1</sup>

Businesses formed the largest part of the British community in China. Their structures and practices exhibited many of the attitudes towards the Chinese discussed in previous chapters, often in more concrete forms than possible in other spheres. The necessity of changing both attitudes and practices was, as chapter 4 has shown, an underlying theme in the thinking of the British Legation, especially as it was a fecund source of complaint and incident. Those who believed, like Ross, in the bayonet approach to Chinese problems were numerous and vocal. While their stance was understandable during the crisis of the Nationalist Revolution itself, after 1928 their continuing conservatism was an obstacle to improving relations with the Chinese.

There were two parts to this problem. Firstly, there was the climate engineered by socialisation in the treaty ports. Changing this involved dealing with language training, the general sinological education of new staff, and especially with social patterns in treaty port business circles. In general it involved attempting to change the insular outlook that existed among Britons and replacing it with one transparently more attuned to the Chinese markets and customers, on which British businesses were ultimately reliant.

Secondly, there was the more tangible process of changing the structures of British businesses in China, in order to strengthen their presence there. Events after May 1925 showed how far their overt and exclusive Britishness left them perilously vulnerable to political attack, both metaphorically and literally. Reform involved making them more adaptable to local conditions, less obviously completely British, and more integrated within the Chinese economy. In practical terms this meant getting on with Chinese business leaders, politicians and military men, cooperating with Chinese business, setting up Sino-British companies and employing more Chinese staff in more responsible positions. In effect this meant moving towards the sinification of British business structures.

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<sup>1</sup> Hamilton Papers, Journal, 27/5/27.



Sinification generally also involved removing or reforming business practices which actively discriminated against Chinese, whether customers or staff. There was discriminatory segregation, for instance, on ships, in British-owned hotels and in other buildings,<sup>2</sup> whilst businesses also upheld and enacted the British community's taboos, such as the prohibition against mixed marriages.<sup>3</sup> Such discrimination contributed significantly to the social exclusivity of the British in China. It largely grew out of distrust of the Chinese that was rooted in accepted constructs of the Chinese character, for example: that Chinese staff could not be trusted, the Chinese mind could not be understood (middlemen were therefore required), and Chinese were incapable of taking responsibility.

Reform involved rethinking by British businessmen both of the nature of their presence in China and their behaviour as institutions, as employers, as providers of services to Chinese customers, and as individuals. They had to put into practice the often quoted platitude (even voiced by Jiang Jieshi) that, "the interests of both foreign and Chinese" businessmen were "essentially the same."<sup>4</sup>

The alternative to reform was withdrawal from China. This was unacceptable for various reasons: much capital was tied up there and retreat would damage British imperial prestige, and could adversely influence the political debates underway in India about the rights of British commerce there. Furthermore, the history of British trade with China was intimately linked to the successful use of force, and it was widely felt that withdrawal would betray that legacy whilst peaceful trade was assumed to be mutually beneficial and sensible.

For two further reasons Britain could not afford to lose the opportunity to exploit what was, when settled conditions returned to China, a potentially vast market. The myth of the China market was still strong and was boosted by the fact that, despite chaotic trading conditions, increasingly good business was being done in China.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Britain could not afford to lose overseas markets for domestic reasons, especially when competition for those markets was international. Warren Swire claimed in 1930 that: "it is desirable in the national interest for British trade in China to continue."<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup> On the question of shipping see a complaint in "The Colour Line on the Pacific", *The People's Tribune*, (NS) 5, 16/10/33, p.284. For one discussion of this issue see "Dr T.Z. Koo and the British Hotels", *China Weekly Review*, 13/7/29, pp.278-79. See also complaints about lavatory nomenclature in the Sassoon Building on the Shanghai Bund, "'Gentlemen' and 'Chinese'," *People's Tribune*, (NS) 5, 16/8/33, pp.68-69.

<sup>3</sup> ST - 9, p.6; ST - 10, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 1/11/29. JSS II 2/8. For Jiang's comment see Lampson to Legation, Tour Series No.245, 22/4/30, FO228\4117\119 2.

<sup>5</sup> The Chinese economy continued to grow throughout this period, and throughout the depression, R.H. Myers, "The World Depression and the Chinese Economy 1930-1936", Ian Brown, ed., *The Economies of Africa and Asia in the Inter-War Depression* (London, 1989), pp.253-78.

<sup>6</sup> The Legation described the letter as "foolish". They were never impressed by his claim that taxation meant that the Government had a 20% interest in Swires' interests and success, C.A. Stirling minute on FO

Department of Overseas Trade's [DOT] 1930-1931 Economic Mission to China and Japan was careful to stress the importance of trade with China to the British economy, and especially to British employment. The onset of the depression in Britain accentuated this necessity, which was also politically informed and often articulated as a response to labour conflict in Britain in the 1920s. These pressures made political conciliation with the Nationalists vital. Consul-General Brennan in Shanghai made it clear, in a speech to the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce in 1930, that:

In these days of financial stringency and unemployment in Great Britain the maintenance and increase of our exports, the keeping of old markets and the development of new ones is a matter of vital necessity, and any policy which seems likely to achieve that object will inevitably prevail over a course of action that might endanger it.<sup>7</sup>

The onset of the depression followed the steady decline in the value of silver in China. This decline raised the price of imported goods and made foreign staff and other overheads more expensive for British companies in China, especially when the value of sterling depreciated in 1929-30. Economic change forced changes in the structure and practice of British business, in attempts to keep costs down in order to compete, if not to survive, in China.<sup>8</sup>

### **I The Structure and Mores of British Business British Staff, the Compradore and Chinese Staff**

As a parallel to their Legation-encouraged reforms in areas of settlement political and social life, various businessmen were responsible for attempts to reform their own businesses and the culture of British business in China. Individuals such as G.W. Swire and N.S. Brown of Swires, and Archibald Rose at BAT had prominent voices in the ongoing debate about the necessity and practicalities of this reform.

The strengths and characteristics of British treaty port socialisation have been shown in chapter 2. British business leaders met each other as young newcomers to China, and in the clubs, lodges, saloons and resorts of treaty port life from which the Chinese were excluded. They had little direct knowledge of China's social, business and political personalities. They had little inclination to improve that knowledge. For a long while, for example, the influential Yu Xiaqing "was seen as the arch-enemy of the foreign community, who, however, knew very little about him except by hearsay". In

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No.827, 18/9/30 enclosing John Swire and Sons to Foreign Office, 10/9/30, FO228\4181\105 18. The taxation point was often raised during an interminable dispute about payment for piracy guards.

<sup>7</sup> "Minutes of British Chamber of Commerce Shanghai, Annual General Meeting 15/4/30", p.17, in Shanghai No.100, 17/4/30, FO228/4352/1 124d.

<sup>8</sup> BS Hongkong to JS London, 6/3/30, JSS II 2/9; In a desperate search for economy measures in 1931 Swires were to ban double-spacing of lines in the typing of letters but the line was drawn at stopping free-afternoon tea for the foreign staff, JS London to BS Hong Kong, 18/9/31, 30/10/31, JSS II 2/10.

1928 Swires were using the *Lunchuan Zhaoshangju* [China Merchants Steam Navigation Company, CMSNCo] as a mediator and channel of communication with him, despite repeated urgings from London to “cultivate” him.<sup>9</sup>

Their servants and rickshawmen apart, the major link between British businessmen and the Chinese was, or was provided by, the compradore. “Compradore” was a loose term, which on ships could mean purser, and elsewhere local manager, but generally meant the head of a firm’s, often informal, Chinese organisation. The compradore’s functions usually involved dealing with a firm’s Chinese business and customers, recruiting the Chinese staff and guaranteeing both them and Chinese customers, keeping the company informed of Chinese market and other news, and generally acting as a middleman between the company and Chinese society and the Chinese market. The compradoric approach to trading was still dominant in the 1920s even though some felt that they were a “dying race”.<sup>10</sup> In fact this structure characterised most British institutions in China, even the consulates.<sup>11</sup>

The compradore system made theoretical sense, using local men to get the best out of local conditions who also acted as a bridge between two initially very different business cultures. However, it also raised a variety of problems. It further deepened the insularity of British communities from local Chinese communities, and this absence of close links between the community leaders was deeply felt after 1925.<sup>12</sup> It was felt that closer links with local Chinese leaders would also probably have averted most of the major incidents that involved British companies - such as the Wanxian incident. In Shanghai, where relations were least evident and the situation most strained, the social taboos and mores which were so inexpedient in the outports were very much stronger. This despite the fact that leading Chinese and foreign businessmen had, ultimately, much in common and much to protect.<sup>13</sup> As Chinese commerce and industry modernised and Western-style firms emerged, the continued use of the compradoric structure became a barrier resented by Chinese businessmen.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 22/6/28, JSS III 2/7; for London’s urgings see G.W. Swire to C.C. Scott, 22/10/25, SP ADD 15; JS London to BS Shanghai/Hong Kong, 23/9/28, JSS II 2/7.

<sup>10</sup> ST - 19, p.22.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, W.C. Scott, “Report on accounting and financial arrangements at His Majesty’s Consulate-General Shanghai”, 2/12/31, K14959/11/210, FO369\2188.

<sup>12</sup> “At present we are entirely dependent on the Compradore for news of what goes on in native circles, both official and commercial”, wrote Warren Swire and this news was “useless”, G.W. Swire to H.W. Robertson, 24/2/28; H.W. Robertson to G.W. Swire, 11/1/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>13</sup> This led to hostile charges of foreign involvement in Jiang Jieshi’s April 12th coup against the left in Shanghai. Although there appears to have been indirect assistance nothing else has ever been proven, J.B. Powell, *My Twenty-Five Years in China* (New York, 1945), pp.158-59; Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, pp.255-56; on Wanxian see Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, p.132. In later life Sir John Pratt felt that as regards political activities the record is not so good” as the straightforward business relationship, Pratt to B.D. Beith [Jardines], 4/8/54, Pratt Papers, SOAS, PPMS 5/25.

<sup>14</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 11/5/28, “Anglo-Chinese Relations”, JSS II 2/7.

These criticisms have to be partly qualified as businessmen had to be pragmatic. The picture, too easily portrayed, of the drunken die-hard at the bar of the Shanghai Club was not completely accurate.<sup>15</sup> This was especially true in the interior along the “up-country” distribution networks, where itinerant British agents inspected local stocks and lubricated relations with Chinese agents, and was true also for travelling salesmen. However, much of this activity was more ceremonial than social and often had the flavour of a small-scale royal progress, or of institutionalised alcoholism.<sup>16</sup>

In physical terms the compradore and his staff were segregated and distrusted. His position was ambiguous and more that of a contracted partner to whom work was farmed out (literally so in the case of the ship compradores and the dockyard labour suppliers) than an employee.<sup>17</sup> He was not privy to all the information that, for example, Swires’ British management had, as he was never quite trusted, and not even Chen Zhaorui [Chun Shutkai], their powerful and well-liked Shanghai compradore, was regularly in direct official communication with London in the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> Physically the compradore was often excluded from the Private Office suite of a company’s offices, in Swires’ case until 1929.<sup>19</sup>

Most companies relied heavily, of course, on their Chinese staff, but few of them seem to have trusted their Chinese employees at all. Ships’ crews were routinely suspected of involvement in piracies, and in smuggling of drugs or of “pidgin” [unmanifested] cargo, whilst it was “perfectly reasonable” for Swires to assume that all godown [warehouse] staff were “generally indulging in malpractices”.<sup>20</sup> Chinese agents in the interior, who were sent goods on consignment, were routinely inspected by European staff, accompanied by interpreters, to check against fraud.<sup>21</sup> Certainly there was

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<sup>15</sup> A sense of proportion must be kept; even taking the most reactionary and sinophobic businessmen into account it is difficult to agree with Jerome Ch’en’s blanket assertion that the Shanghai merchants wanted to “wipe the [Chinese] race from the face of the earth”, *China and the West*, p.45.

<sup>16</sup> Logan, *China*, pp.58-59; Dobson, *China Cycle*, pp.17-22. The APC’s agent in Nanning was often drunk with the local Chinese clients and officials and this was an accepted part of the job, Benson diaries, 21/1/30, 31/1/30; see also the description of a dinner party for local Chinese officials given by Philips of the APC in Wuzhou, J.M. Philips Papers, Letter to P.S. Jones, 4/5/25.

<sup>17</sup> “You were both in partnership really”, ST - 19, p.12.

<sup>18</sup> This reflected in part the structure of Swires’ business with the parent company John Swire and Sons based in London with subsidiary companies, which in turn employed the compradores, such as Butterfield and Swire in China. The chain of responsibility went from company and departmental heads to London. The compradore was never a departmental head in these terms. There are no letters from or to Chen Zhaorui [Chun Shutkai] in the private and semi-official correspondence to and from Swires’ managers in China.

<sup>19</sup> G.W. Swire to C.C. Scott, 31/1/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>20</sup> On piracies see, for example, BS Shanghai to JS London, 4/1/29, JSS III 2/8, and BS Hong Kong to JS London, 2/11/28, JSS III 1/6; on godowns see G.W. Swire to J.K. Swire, 7/2/30, SP ADD 15.

<sup>21</sup> Cook, *Lion and the Dragon*, pp.35-36, 44-45; Sherman Cochran, *Big Business in China: Sino-Foreign Rivalry in the Cigarette Industry, 1890-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980), pp.29-30; the consignment system allowed British companies to claim that as the goods were still their property they were protected by extraterritoriality, this device allowed compensation claims to be routinely made against the central authorities.

enough pilfering and fraud to warrant precaution, but it is clear that the dishonesty of Chinese staff and agents and the need for supervision was taken for granted: when the Swire agent in Shashi was praised for his knowledge of local affairs it was pointed out that he was probably working “in collusion with other agents” to improve his commissions.<sup>22</sup> It was usually in tones of surprise that the ability of Chinese to work satisfactorily without supervision was noted.<sup>23</sup> Such evidence was slow to be accepted. Companies were also aware of the prejudices of the foreign community in China. European stores, for example, would not accept Chinese salesmen, nor would dockyard clients be happy with Chinese staff.<sup>24</sup> The question of trust also arose; some consuls preferred to deal with British agents of British companies: because “occasions must not infrequently arise in which I am able to give confidentially to a British agent certain information which I must withhold from a Chinese.”<sup>25</sup>

### Labour

Most of these companies used large Chinese labour forces, especially the manufacturing, mining and shipping concerns. The Kailan Mining Administration [KMA], and especially BAT, were usually at pains to point out the good treatment accorded to their workforces, in terms of accommodation and education for workers’ children.<sup>26</sup> Their strike problems, however, were not always politically motivated.<sup>27</sup> In the shipping business Chinese passengers and crews were often lumped together in discussions by British management; their race took precedence over their business on board ship. Facilities for the crews were bad, distinctive messing facilities, for example, not being provided as a rule until after the war. On some ships there was no accommodation for the compradore’s staff, who slept anywhere they could.<sup>28</sup> Ships’ foreign officers left the running of the ship to the compradore and, especially at this time when piracy was a major problem, retreated, with the foreign passengers, behind their piracy grilles.<sup>29</sup> Ship owners had very little control over a great deal of the

<sup>22</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 17/7/31 and G.W. Swire’s marginal notation, JSS III 2/12.

<sup>23</sup> For example, in a time of political unrest the Swire “Interpreters alone made inspection trips, and gave satisfactory service”, “Up-Country Selling Organisation 1929”, JSS V 6/3.

<sup>24</sup> Taikoo Sugar Refinery, Letters of Instruction, No.4, 29/8/30, JSS V 6/6; G.W. Swire to JSS, 31/5/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>25</sup> H.I. Harding to Lampson, S/O 10/7/30, FO228\4276/2 63b1; Harding was strongly rebuked by the Legation which issued a circular to consuls forbidding them to refuse access to employees of British companies, see Legation dossier 63b1 1930, *passim*., FO228\4276.

<sup>26</sup> Cochran, *Big Business*, p.137; *B.A.T. Bulletin*, May 1925, p.16.

<sup>27</sup> On the economic motivations behind strikes at BAT see Jean Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labour Movement, 1919-1927* (Stanford, 1968), pp.156-59, 382-84.

<sup>28</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 9/11/28, JSS III 2/7.

<sup>29</sup> The Report of the Anti Piracy Committee to the Hongkong Government in 1929 bore this out: “ships’ officers have generally disassociated themselves from anti-piracy measures and have avoided interfering with the passengers which they consider to be the sphere of the Compradore,” “Report of the Anti-Piracy Committee, Hongkong”. Commodore Hongkong 0260 [30/10/29] to C-in-C China, PRO ADM 116/2761, “China Piracy 1930-31.”

accommodation in their vessels, let alone their staff.<sup>30</sup> On the Upper River political chaos compounded this lack of control. This indirect system was inefficient. Firstly, ships' compradores were never trusted to remit in full the farmed-out passenger earnings. Secondly, the lack of control over contractors who catered for the Chinese passengers, and whose attentions were, at best, an expensive nuisance, also became self-defeating.

### Chinese Customers

#### The example of Chinese passengers on British steamships

Most British firms did not deal directly with their Chinese customers. Most rarely needed to, the Chinese agents who staffed the distribution agencies did that. However, those who did realise the value of direct contacts did reap rewards - this was the secret of the success of BAT and Imperial Chemical Industries [ICI] in establishing themselves in China.<sup>31</sup> There were, especially in shipping circles, indirect contacts through the compradore. This persisted even though British firms realised the value of personal contact with their shippers and consignees.

The structure and quality of steamship passenger accommodation provides a well-recorded example, and case study, of British attitudes to Chinese customers. Conditions on board foreign-owned ships replicated and enhanced patterns of social and racial division in treaty port society. What amounted to European-only bastions were built into them to prevent piracy. In practice there was segregation in nearly every part of the travelling process. Passengers travelled in separate classes, disembarked in separate ways, and were sold tickets by parallel but separate organisations, by the Butterfield and Swire Agency office for Europeans travelling on China Navigation Company ships, and by the compradore's office for Chinese passengers. Foreigners were generally not allowed by that company, and by Jardine's Indo-China Steam Navigation Company, to travel in Chinese accommodation.<sup>32</sup>

Conditions in the different classes of ship-board accommodation were rigidly different. Traditionally there was usually a Saloon class for foreign travellers, with foreign food and furniture and a Chinese First Class, with Chinese food and round tables.

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<sup>30</sup> ST - 7 p.35; see also the memorandum by Erich Teichman on the "S.S. Tuckwo Incident". Teichman was on board the Jardine's Indo-China SCo vessel when an opium smuggling-related fracas took place. He commented that "the officers concern themselves only with the navigation of the ship and know nothing about what goes on amongst the Chinese passengers and crew", "S.S. Tuckwo Incident", memo by Mr Teichman, 17/1/30, Minister's Tour Series No.26, FO228\4224\13 37a.

<sup>31</sup> Cochran, *Big Business*, pp.10-24; Patrick Brodie, *Crescent Over Cathay: China and I.C.I., 1898-1956* (Hong Kong, 1990), pp.100-109.

<sup>32</sup> ST - 13 p.35; BS Shanghai to JS London, 24/4/31, JSS III 2/9; *NCH*, 30/6/28, p.564. Foreigners were also restricted to First Class passages on the Yantai to Shanghai steamers, "News Letters from China Between 1926 and 1938", April 1938, p.531, E.J. Mann papers, SOAS Mss.380302/2. Before 1925 all shipping companies had farmed out their Chinese accommodation on the Shanghai to Hankou route to the Yangtze Passenger Syndicate, a Chinese organisation. This had been stopped by the anti-piracy guidelines of the British Government, *NCH*, 30/6/28, p.564.

This was described, on various ships, as being below the foreign level in “bath, sanitary conveniences...”<sup>33</sup> and lacking the “deck space and other comforts”<sup>34</sup> of the saloon class. There was also, depending on the ship, a 2nd Class Chinese and 3rd Class or steerage.<sup>35</sup>

Much of this differentiation was economically motivated and concerned with arranging accommodation to suit all pockets. But there was a transparent indifference towards the conditions in which Chinese passengers ate, slept, bathed, relieved themselves and promenaded.<sup>36</sup> On the CNCo ships *Poyang*, *Tatung* and *Ngankin* in 1928 there were only:

two water closets, both situated on the upper deck, on which there is accommodation for 144 Chinese passengers and ship’s staff. On the bridge deck where there are berths for 30 first class and 38 second class passengers there is no lavatory at all.<sup>37</sup>

After this shipboard discrimination the final insult for Chinese passengers on China Navigation Company ships before 1930 would have been that the Yangzi steamers berthed at the Pudong side of the Huangpu at Shanghai. A launch met all steamers to land saloon, that is foreign, passengers

on the Shanghai side leaving most of the better class of Chinese ...to take a sampan... and put up with exorbitant overcharges on the part of sampanmen and coolies at Pudong.

Not surprisingly “friction has been experienced in preventing native passengers... from boarding her, and resentment is often shown at this “preferential” treatment.” European saloon passengers had also complained - about “being swamped with Chinese” as a result of one unsatisfactory attempt at mollifying better class Chinese.<sup>38</sup>

## **II The Changing Nature of Trade in China**

### **General Factors and Foreign Competition**

Various factors, internal and external, combined to add a sense of almost desperate urgency to attempts to alter this unsatisfactory state of affairs. Demands by Chinese commercial and political opinion for the Nationalist regime to institute nationalist economic policies worried British opinion. The iniquities of foreign businesses were stock components of anti-imperialist propaganda [see figure 6, following

<sup>33</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 15/6/28, JSS III 2/7.

<sup>34</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 10/8/28, includes D.H. Whamond (Hankou) to C.C. Knight, 28/7/28, JSS III 2/7.

<sup>35</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 7/2/30, JSS III 1/8.

<sup>36</sup> This was not restricted to the China coast. Indian passengers on the Bombay-east African line had similar causes for complaint in 1930, Inchcape to W.F. Jenkins, 10/1/30, BIS 8/6.

<sup>37</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 3/8/28, JSS III 2/7, it should be noted that there was no differentiation between Chinese passengers and crew; See BS Shanghai to JS London, 24/2/28, JSS III 2/7, for evidence of Swires’ competitive interests with Jardines over the question of conditions in Chinese accommodation.

<sup>38</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 10/1/30, JSS III 2/9.

page].<sup>39</sup> ICI, for example, feared protective barriers would be erected to protect the nascent modern Chinese chemicals industry.<sup>40</sup> Some observers saw the logic of some trade protection, for example, in the shape of “national products” (*guohuo*) campaigns, but others saw it only as an extension of the political use of the economic boycott.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See Victor Purcell on the implications of Sun Yatsen’s *Sanminzhuyi*, *Problems of Chinese Education* (London, 1936), p.198.

<sup>40</sup> J.W. Gibb, May 1931, “The Possibilities of Chemical Manufacture in China and the Prospects of ICI Participation Therein, Political Considerations”, ICI ICHO/REP/0486.

<sup>41</sup> See Teichman’s minute on Shanghai No.178, 2/7/30, FO228\4279\7 67w; on the boycott weapon see Remer, *Study of Chinese Boycotts, passim.*, and D.A. Jordan, *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: the failure of China’s “Revolutionary Diplomacy”, 1931-32* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1991).





Firms in China were as aware, as the Foreign Office, of the trend of events in India where debates about economic nationalism had been raised by the 1930 Simon report. Discussions of the reservation of coastal trade in India for Indian companies had a disturbingly familiar ring to them and, it was felt, would fatally undermine British attempts to thwart, evade, and survive these and similar manifestations of economic nationalism in China.<sup>42</sup>

Economic and political nationalism aside, war, and the banditry and lawlessness it bred continued to be the biggest disrupter of trade after 1928, although for political reasons the extent was often exaggerated. Ships and rolling stock were commandeered or pirated, boycotts launched, stocks seized or destroyed. Disruption, however, as the trade figures show, was not always that damaging. “Whilst... the threat of civil war continues, the best the firms can do is to mark time with small sales, until the militarists consent to compose their difficulties”, was the advice of the Jinan acting Consul-General in 1930, whilst simultaneously announcing big increases in local sales for BAT and ICI.<sup>43</sup> Extraterritoriality did save lives and property and frequently made it possible for foreign merchants to keep on trading when conditions made it impossible for their Chinese competitors. Some businessmen found the warfare exceedingly profitable. Illegal munitions imports (they were banned by a British instigated international agreement), sales of war-related material and expert work, such as that of the Briton Frank Sutton for Zhang Zoulin, all paid well.<sup>44</sup>

Foreign competition and British uncompetitiveness were identified as further major problems facing British trade in China. Worries about the effects of British attitudes were not confined to the China market,<sup>45</sup> and were also part of the wider “salesmanship” debate in British trade, the subject, for example, of a Mansion House speech by the Prince of Wales in 1929.<sup>46</sup> The DOT’s mission to the Far East reported that Britain’s exports to China were declining rapidly, when those of the United States, France and Germany were soaring. Their explanation lay in British high prices, bad marketing and poor advertising. ICI’s success with its “Crescent” brand of fertiliser, and

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<sup>42</sup> See BS Shanghai to JS London, 24/5/29, which quotes pertinent parts of the “Report of the External Capital Committee 1929 (India), JSS III 2/8. On protectionist debates in India see B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947*,: *The Economics of Decolonisation in India* (London and Basingstoke), 1979, pp.60-74, 118-20..

<sup>43</sup> Local sales for BAT rose from \$3,500,000 to \$5,410,000 and for ICI from \$360,000 in 1927 to \$1,050,000 in 1929. APC sales rose from \$1,130,000 to \$1,560,000 in 1928-29. None of that appears to be “marking” time, especially in the year which saw the Nationalist attack on north China and the Jinan incident, Tsinan No.7, Six Month Intelligence Report, 31/3/30, FO228\4205\3 32a.

<sup>44</sup> Anthony B. Chan, *Arming the Chinese: The Western Armaments Trade in Warlord China, 1920-1928* (Vancouver, 1982), pp.49-53, 57-64, 79-82, 122-23; see also Drage, *General of Fortune*, *passim*..

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, “British Prestige in Malaya”, *Eastern Engineering*, 14/3/29, pp.55-56; *Eastern Engineering*, 26/9/29, p.224, on tales from the Straits Settlements.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, and “Salesmanship Abroad: The Prince’s Stirring Speech”, *Eastern Engineering*, 14/3/29, p.61.

BAT's aggressive marketing campaigns were the great exceptions.<sup>47</sup> Germany's success was not based on treaty privilege, but on better marketing, better language study amongst foreign staff, better treatment of Chinese staff and a greater interest in Sino-foreign enterprises.<sup>48</sup>

### Internal Factors

In every field one fundamental change which has come in recent years has been apparent: the emergence of the Chinese themselves as competitors for business in and with China,

wrote Grover Clark in 1932.<sup>49</sup> This was not just a by-product of political change, but resulted from social change in Chinese society and also from the evolution of Chinese business practice in the face of Western competition. "Modern" Chinese firms, such as the Yong Li Soda Company were beginning to operate in Western controlled (and often created) markets.<sup>50</sup> They were also beginning to do so with specific national or local support, and with supporting legislation, or harassment, to disbar foreign activities.<sup>51</sup>

The DOT identified as the major trend the fact that more and more Chinese companies were trading directly with foreign firms, thereby cutting out the old-fashioned foreign agency houses such as Dodwells or Arnholds, which was agent for 35 firms.<sup>52</sup> Chinese banks and other firms were becoming more numerous and sophisticated, and were capable of taking over work previously done by foreign and more old-fashioned Chinese institutions. DOT reports stressed that most trade difficulties were due to unsettled conditions and different cultural and business practices. They concluded in 1930 that the most immediate way of coping with this change was for companies to secure the "goodwill of the Chinese people", and therefore their market, which would require "a more intimate knowledge of the Chinese and their ways of life and thought than, speaking generally, businessmen in China at present possess".<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> DOT, *Report of the British Economic Mission to the Far East, 1930-31* (London, 1931), pp.10, 55-56; W.J. Reader, *Imperial Chemical Industries, A History, Volume 1, The Forerunners 1870-1926* (London, 1970), p.341; Cochran, *Big Business in China, passim.*; Brodie, *Crescent over Cathay*, pp.97-97, 106-109.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas, "Foreign Office and the Business Lobby", p.331; for comments on this from a British businessman see ST - 13, pp.38-39; "German Commercial Methods in China", FO No.503, 10/5/29, FO228\4044\6 67; see a generalised acceptance of this problem in *Eastern Engineering*, 26/9/29, p.224.

<sup>49</sup> Grover Clark, *Economic Rivalries in China* (New Haven 1932), p.132. "The foreign businessman in China is the unhappy victim of his times... Foreign business in China - not foreign business with China-is doomed... it will be done by the Chinese themselves," Pfeffer, *China*, p.277.

<sup>50</sup> Brodie, *Crescent*, pp.76-87.

<sup>51</sup> James Reardon-Anderson, *The Study of Change: Chemistry in China, 1840-1949* (Cambridge, 1991), p.279; On the local level see the relationship between warlord Liu Xiang and the Minsheng Shiye steamship company on the Upper Yangzi route, Robert A. Kapp, "Chunking as a Center of Warlord Power, 1926-1937", M. Elvin and G.W. Skinner, eds., *The Chinese City Between Two Worlds* (Stanford, 1974), pp.150-52.

<sup>52</sup> DOT, 1931-33, p.27; *CYB 1931*, p.III.

<sup>53</sup> DOT, 1930, p.61.

This growth of Chinese business was partly caused by, and partly caused, the growth of a nationalist Chinese middle class (although descriptions of a homogeneous class can be misleading). It was largely urban, frequently grew out of successful compradore families, and supplied the competitors, the compradores, the staff, and the increasingly vocal and discerning customers of foreign companies; those in the shipping business where customers voted with their wallets, could not afford to ignore it.<sup>54</sup> It was responsible for the modernisation of towns, which caused a reassessment of insurance scope and practice amongst foreign companies. It also supplied the most vocal opposition, through various organisations, to the trading and other privileges of foreign business.<sup>55</sup> In April 1925 Swires were aware of this change, although some of its political repercussions had yet to hit them:

I am... wondering whether we are not too inclined to regard the Chinese businessman as he was twenty years ago rather than as he is today with his European and American education... the modern young Chinese can and does run many thoroughly efficient concerns.<sup>56</sup>

However politically unsuccessful the “modern young Chinese” were, especially in getting their economic-nationalist agenda enforced by the National Government, they still remained a social, economic and ticket-buying force, which had to be better catered for, as did the Nationalist military-bureaucratic elite.<sup>57</sup>

### **Staying on: How and Why**

There was an ideological strain to the determination of British businessmen to stay in business in China. This involved an element of practical realism in the assessment of the role that foreign firms played in some sectors of the economy; there was also an element of racial condescension towards Chinese capabilities, combined with a belief in a sense of imperial mission.<sup>58</sup> “I can’t save China” admitted Warren Swire in 1929, but he still believed that:

our position in China depends in the last resort and perhaps all the way through on Faith in our destiny. I’m sure it is principally the moral factor, which will win... They [foreign Shanghai] don’t realise that there is more in business than

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<sup>54</sup> Parks M. Coble, *The Shanghai Capitalists and the Nanking Government, 1927-37* (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1986), pp.13-18.

<sup>55</sup> Coble, *Shanghai Capitalists*, pp.1-2, 10-11, 18-27; Marie-Claire Bergère “‘The Other China’: Shanghai from 1919 to 1949” in C. Howe, ed., *Shanghai: Revolution and Development in an Asian Metropolis* (Cambridge, 1981), pp.1-34.

<sup>56</sup> J.K. Swire to JS London, 17/4/25, SP ADD 15.

<sup>57</sup> Coble, *Shanghai Capitalists*, pp.261-69.

<sup>58</sup> “The serious Chinese quite realized that to cut out foreign shipping would be fatal to China itself”, “Minister’s interview with Mr. [N.S.] Brown”, Tour Series No.49, 6/2/30, FO228\4273\7 63; see also Lampson ‘s minute, 29/3/30, *ibid.*.

cash and I believe that Young China expects more from the foreigner than a mere material desire to make money.<sup>59</sup>

Businessmen such as Swire felt the Chinese still needed foreign economic tutelage. Indeed, without the propaganda of altruism the British were vulnerable to anti-imperialist criticisms.<sup>60</sup> Chinese companies were still characteristically “Chinese”: they were ripe for tutelage. They needed to be taught fair trading practices (“devote your efforts to educating people like [Yu Xiaqing’s San Bei shipping company] up to a foreign sense of commercial honour”<sup>61</sup>), they needed to be trained in Western ways of running businesses and in Western types of business (such as insurance) and also to be taught the right ways of carrying out their social and political duties. It was claimed that they lacked, for example, the sense of democratic restraint and responsibility needed in the Shanghai Municipal Council.<sup>62</sup>

In the face of political and economic change, and foreign and Chinese competition, the British were in danger of leaving the China market by default, they would be squeezed out when they felt they could not afford to be squeezed out anywhere. Lampson was circumspect about the problems facing British business in China but easily, if ambivalently, identified areas where adaptation to the threats posed by change could take place:

it is perhaps in his stiff-necked insistence on hard business facts, and unwillingness to appreciate, or perhaps pander to, Chinese mentality and custom, that the British trader in China fails, if he really does fail, in competition with his rivals.<sup>63</sup>

“Stiff-necked” Britishness then, was an identifiable problem. The climate engineered by British treaty port socialisation was increasingly seen to be a hindrance to British trade. Minimising the effects of that process and actively countering some aspects of it were proposed solutions to some of the problems facing British firms in 1928. They also surfaced in most other areas where reforms or compromises were contemplated.

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<sup>59</sup> Sir Frederick Whyte probably could save China thought Warren Swire, G.W. Swire to J.K. Swire, 23/2/29, SP ADD 15. Lampson thought Swire “a curious downright sort of fellow, hard-headed and shrewd, and yet with a streak of rather surprising idealism in his nature”, Lampson Diaries, 29/2/29.

<sup>60</sup> “We often think that more harm than good is done by the stress so often laid in public speeches on our wish being merely to trade with China in peace and quiet and not to acquire territory etc. etc. It is rather apt to lay us open to the reply “All the interest you take in us Chinese is to make money out of us and go away. You do not want to help us in our difficulties”, G.W. Swire to T.H.R. Shaw and N.S. Brown, 17/1/30, Swire Archives, Misc. 121/IV, Inter-War Political Letters, 1925-38 (Sept.).

<sup>61</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 8/6/28, JSS III 2/7; also G.W. Swire to N.S. Brown, 16/5/29, SP ADD 15: “For the sake of our future influence and position in China we have got to do our best to train up in this way competitors for ourselves and, although I can quite understand caution, we cannot afford to be sticky. Things are moving quicker than many people think.” Japanese companies also needed to be raised to “a higher state of commercial civilization” as well, JS London to BS Shanghai and Hongkong 25/10/29, JSS III 2/8.

<sup>62</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 6/5/27, enclosing BS Tientsin to BS Shanghai, 28/4/27, JSS II 2/6; G.W. Swire to C.C. Scott, 22/10/26, SP ADD 15.

<sup>63</sup> Lampson to Sir E.F. Crowe (DOT), 20/10/30, FO228\4280\39 67x.

### III Reforming relations between British Businesses and the Chinese Cooperation

It was often stated that the education of Chinese businesses was to result from the example set by British commercial behaviour and from cooperation with British firms.

No matter what treaty rights may be given up by deliberate negotiation... we English will stay in China and have an ever-increasing amount of face and influence. The situation in an Oriental country is in my opinion largely psychological... the Chinese want us in their hearts to stay and appreciate our straightforward way of running things.<sup>64</sup>

wrote Warren Swire in 1929. This identification of the “real” desires of the Chinese was quite usual as was the emphasis on psychology. Swire’s idealism tapered in nicely with its practical conclusions that Britain’s physical presence in China was widely seen to be grounded on her psychological presence. The only way to guarantee that presence, war apart, was through cooperation. Closer links were also the only way the ability of foreigners to “handle” orientals could be used advantageously.<sup>65</sup>

“Cooperation”, as well as being an economic and political necessity was a vague, modish, term and was used as such. It encompassed active business partnership, friendly business and social relations, and a more realistic and conciliatory approach to Chinese nationalism.

#### Municipal and Social Life

Cooperation began with public moderation. Firms attempted to restrain the die-hards and extremists. In this they followed the lead of the Legation. Swires were wary of active involvement with the Shanghai Publicity Bureau, the London office was quick to instruct its Shanghai managers to push for treaty port moderation, for instance in the Joint Committee of the British Chamber of Commerce and China Association at Shanghai.<sup>66</sup> ICI kept out of public treaty port life until 1933 as a matter of policy, probably for pragmatic reasons, although the advantages of involvement eventually outweighed the disadvantages.<sup>67</sup> N.S. Brown was made Swires’ Shanghai Manager in 1929 in order to “get on to the Council and try and get a real move on progressively”, by acting as a

<sup>64</sup> G.W. Swire to Lampson, 4/5/29, FO228\4044\13 67b.

<sup>65</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai/Hong Kong, 25/10/29, JSS II 2/8.

<sup>66</sup> For Swires’ actions to curb the impact of the “die-hard contingent” see, for example, the instructions on allaying tendencies to “War Fever”, BS Shanghai to JS London, 4/2/27, JSS II 2/6; BS Shanghai to JS London, 9/3/28 and *ibid.*, 25/5/28, JSS II 2/7; Swires were wary of the SPB’s public belligerence in its *Bulletin*: “We propose to take no active part in disseminating this literature in view of its critical, if not unfriendly, tone towards matters Chinese”, BS Shanghai to JS London 31/8/2, JSS II 2/7.

<sup>67</sup> Brodie, *Crescent*, p.186. ICI had a reputation for trying not to involve the British Legation and Consular service in taxation disputes, A.H. George minute on Foochow No.39, 8/10/30, FO228\4232\67 41c.

conciliatory and restraining influence in its politics and society.<sup>68</sup> He was a personable mixer although it was felt that he needed a “Chinese ADC” to interpret for him and ‘nurse’ the right people. This was a concession to the obvious need to have a Chinese middleman of some sort but not the Chinese barrier the compradores had always been. His personal contacts with the Chinese became his “very great asset.”<sup>69</sup> The Consul-General and the Legation felt he was “overenthusiastic” but recognised that he was:

partly for business reasons no doubt, dead set on cultivating the Chinese who matter; and he has tackled his task in a thorough-going way - much to the disgust of the average “Shanghailander”.<sup>70</sup>

Another problem such a high-profile appointment solved was that Chinese business leaders were generally dealing with British managers whose seniors were in London. This coloured direct contacts and allowed the Far East taipans to be rather more conservative than their distant British seniors. This was the same problem faced by the Legation in the case of individuals such as Sir Sydney Barton. The more colonial atmosphere in Hong Kong also affected companies based there, such as Jardines or the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank. It was increasingly realised that the more mature, senior, and independent those in control in the East were, the better, although the diplomatic energy of the Keswick brothers at Jardines, or ICI’s V. St John Killery, was a good substitute for maturity.<sup>71</sup>

British companies like Swires and BAT used their oligarchic control of the SMC to introduce Chinese representation on to the council. This marked their public acceptance of the equal social status of Chinese leaders such as Yu Xiaqing. G.W. Swire felt, in 1928, that:

it is perfectly obvious, that for whatever cause, our present sources of information are useless. We must try to get more in touch with the Chinese and with happenings behind the scenes.<sup>72</sup>

Next year he was planning, on the recommendation of Sir Frederick Whyte, to meet a formidable list of businessmen and politicians (but businessmen had priority) such as

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<sup>68</sup> See “Minister’s Interview with Mr. Brown”, Tour Series No.49, 6/2/30, FO228\4273\7 63. His predecessor was felt by Warren Swire to have the “Shanghai “Mind””, marginal notation on J.K. Swire to G.W. Swire, 25/3/28, SP ADD 15.

<sup>69</sup> J.K. Swire to G.W. Swire, 7/3/30, SP ADD 15; G.W. Swire to J.S. Scott, 17/2/33, JSS I 3/6; the extent to which his social success was helped by his collection of (largely pornographic) watches, the exhibition of which was a favourite after-dinner ritual, cannot be determined, (private information).

<sup>70</sup> Minute by A.F. Aveling on Shanghai S/O, 30/10/30, FO228\4273\24; Shanghai No.18, 3/2/30, FO228\4283\6 69b. Lampson and others also felt that Swires had “nobbled” Lionel Curtis and his contributions to setting up Feetham’s investigation, Lampson Diaries, 17/1/30. Wang Zhengting also approved of Brown’s “direct” approach, Maze to Brown, 20/1/30, Maze Papers, Confidential Letters Vol.3.

<sup>71</sup> G.W. Swire to J.K. Swire, 2/5/30, SP ADD 15; ICI, whose problem was also financial, sent out Killery in 1933, he revamped the China company and took ICI back into public treaty port life, Brodie, *Crescent*, pp.180-89.

<sup>72</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai/Hong Kong, 23/9/28, JSS II 2/7.

Chen Guangfu (“K.P. Chen”, of the Shanghai Commercial and Savings Bank), Xu Xinliu (National Commercial Bank), Li Ming (Chairman of the Bank of China) Song Ziwen, Kong Xiangxi and Wang Zhengting.<sup>73</sup> The Chinese he met on that trip were all at pains to “lay stress on personal private entertainment”.<sup>74</sup> In view of the success of Sir Frederick Whyte, Swires also contemplated appointing their own “diplomatic agent”.<sup>75</sup> They later delegated a compradore to work as an adviser at the National Government’s Ministry of Finance. (This was not a totally new policy, Chen Zhaorui had previously been an adviser to the Ministry of Communications in the Northern Government and a member of the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce, but these links do not appear to have been used for Swires’ benefit and were anachronistic by 1927).<sup>76</sup> ICI in 1931 was “almost out of touch with influential Chinese”, and therefore with Nanjing, and this was felt to be its “chief weakness”. In tandem with its reorganisation in 1933 the company’s new manager set out actively to cultivate influential Chinese and later appointed one as a director of the China company.<sup>77</sup> In 1929 the KMA took on C. Ku [Gu Zhen] from the Peking-Mukden railway and set him to work in the Head Office preparing himself in case it was “necessary at some future date to send him to Nanking.”<sup>78</sup> Swires employed a relative of Wellington Koo in the 1930s, probably as much for his family links as for his British education.<sup>79</sup>

In 1929 Arnhold’s Peking manager, warning of the danger to Britain’s prestige and position in China unless there was a “radical alteration in British policy and trade methods”, asked the Governor of the Bank of England to use any influence “it might possess in commercial circles... to induce them to send out first-class representatives charged with a mission to establish closer personal relations with Chinese circles.”<sup>80</sup> This, in fact, was what Sir Frederick Whyte had already done. Other individuals such as N.S. Brown and Lampson had also contributed. High-profile links did become common, the SMC even renamed a road in honour of Yu Xiaqing, but these conciliatory moves served to obscure the continuing lack of more widespread social intercourse amongst junior figures, which continued to have longer-term implications.<sup>81</sup>

### Quotidian Business Life

<sup>73</sup> H.W. Robertson to G.W. Swire, 11/1/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>74</sup> G.W. Swire, letter extract, 15/2/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>75</sup> G.W. Swire to H.W. Robertson, 16/12/27, SP ADD 15.

<sup>76</sup> M.C. Powell, ed., *Who’s Who in China* (3rd edition, Shanghai, 1925), pp. 102-103.

<sup>77</sup> J.W. Gibb, May 1931, “The Possibilities of Chemical Manufacture in China and the Prospects of ICI Participation Therein, Pt.1, General Considerations”, ICI ICHO/REP/0486; Brodie, *Crescent*, pp.187-88.

<sup>78</sup> E.J. Nathan to P.C. Young, 11/7/29, E.J. Nathan papers; Tim Wright, *Coal Mining in China’s Economy and Society, 1895-1937* (Cambridge, 1984), p.129.

<sup>79</sup> ST - 6, p.45.

<sup>80</sup> “Interview with Major A. Barker, S.SO., M.C., Peking Manager for Victor Sassoon and Arnhold and Co.” with the Governor, (Montagu Norman), 3/6/29, Bank Of England OV104\27.

<sup>81</sup> *Oriental Affairs*, January 1937, p.17; ST - 16, p.35; ST - 6, p.9.



The question of routine “entertaining” of Chinese clients, competitors, and worthies, vexed Swires in the late 1920s. Foreign agents were told in 1925 that they should call on Chinese shippers monthly “and not just leave it to their compradore as at present” but there was little progress.<sup>82</sup> Erecting a special building in Hankou was suggested at one point, although this was scaled down to a planned special reception dining room in the Hankow shipping hong. This was felt to be the compradore’s job, but this traditional view was increasingly untenable.<sup>83</sup> It was becoming clear that such social cultivation ought to be more personal, less ceremonial, and involve more directly the foreign staff and the Chinese:

when it is necessary to get in touch with some important Chinese for any purpose... you will have to do so in your own houses, ...a much better compliment than entertaining in a hotel.<sup>84</sup>

To this end the Shanghai manager’s house was replaced in 1934 by a much grander building, (“the only gentleman’s house in the place”<sup>85</sup>) reservations about the cost being overruled for pragmatic reasons.<sup>86</sup> The situation appears to have improved with staff in Hankou, for example, getting into closer direct contact with Chinese shippers and consignees by 1931.<sup>87</sup>

### **Sino-British Companies**

In 1925 G.W. Swire had described Swires’ idea of Sino-British cooperation as “to keep ourselves to ourselves... but to work in friendly competition with Chinese concerns of standing”. This generally meant market-sharing agreements. Events moved too far to allow this complacent approach to continue. In 1930 N.S. Brown described the intent of the company’s plans for a Sino-British shipping company as to “Give the Chinese the shadow and keep the substance - that was, as usual, the ideal at which to aim.”<sup>88</sup> The psychological repercussions of cooperation were still widely felt to outweigh practical ones, but this approach was becoming anachronistic. The DOT’s 1933 report bluntly

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<sup>82</sup> J.K. Swire to JS London, 5/6/25, SP ADD 15.

<sup>83</sup> When J.K. Swire banqueted in Hankow in 1925 he knew none of his fellow guests and relied on the compradore’s word that they were “the right people”, J.K. Swire letter, 1/6/25, SP ADD 15.

<sup>84</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 13/4/28, JSS II 2/7; JS London to BS Shanghai, 16/12/27, JSS II 2/6.

<sup>85</sup> G.W. Swire, 22/3/29, Swire Archives, Misc. Architectural letters.

<sup>86</sup> C.C. Scott to G.W. Swire, 16/10/31, JSS I 3/6.

<sup>87</sup> C.C. Scott to G.W. Swire, 21/8/31, JSS I 3/6. The pragmatic reasons for such reform (and the insularity of British business) are also shown by the debate about whether Swires should appoint a *German* speaker to Hankou (a native Briton and certainly not a German, who would not be so authoritative) in order to get more shipping trade from German companies there. The idea was suggested by the appointment of a German resident there as agent for the Glen Line, JS London to BS Shanghai, 4/5/28, JSS II 2/7.

<sup>88</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai and Hongkong, 1/5/25, SP ADD 15 Personal Letters to/from Managers out East; “Minister’s interview with Mr. Brown”, Tour Series No.49, 6/2/30, FO228\4273\7 63; DOT, 1931-3, p. 12. On the “as usual” see, for example, J.K. Swire to JS London, 17/4/25: “We should I think in future get as closely associated with Chinese as possible in everything but be careful never to lose control and let them run us”, SP ADD 15.

stated for the first time, that cooperation with Chinese businesses would be the surest way of being successful in China. By this it meant active collaboration for which British companies would have to be better prepared than before. Still paternalistic in tone, it was an improvement on previous DOT reports; usually they had restricted themselves to dire warnings about the dangers of direct contacts with unknown, and possibly untrustworthy, Chinese firms.<sup>89</sup>

Cooperation now meant planned or realised Sino-British companies. These were undertaken largely for political reasons, as expressions of goodwill but also as ways of cementing the presence of British companies into the Chinese economy in a less obviously alien way.<sup>90</sup> They were also undertaken to solve local and short-term problems. Cooperation was not entirely new. To gain mineral extraction rights jointly-owned companies had had to be formed although such enterprises were usually under *de facto* foreign control.<sup>91</sup> At the annual meeting of shareholders of one KMA subsidiary “a certain amount of tact [was] apparently required... to avoid emphasising the foreign influence”.<sup>92</sup> Other foreign companies, especially BAT and ICI, had traditionally relied on mergers and cooperation to knock out their competition.<sup>93</sup> Jardines and Swires cooperated with the CMSNCo to run Yangzi steamers as a joint company, the Luen Steamship Company, under CMSNCo management.<sup>94</sup> In effect this involved subsidising the perennially penniless Chinese company which was able to run these steamers under the British flag, and therefore under British protection, as it suffered greatly from ship-commandeering during the warlord era.<sup>95</sup>

Swires and Jardines were worried by the threat of the restriction of coastal and inland navigation rights to Chinese companies. The Legation felt that Chinese public interest (“insofar as it exists in China at all about anything”) was interested in the question.<sup>96</sup> Swires felt the need to further placate their competitors and pre-empt nationalistic policy decisions by the National Government; closer cooperation was required, at the very least.

Swires formed the Taikoo Chinese Navigation Company for their Upper Yangzi trade. This was incorporated in 1930, after two years deliberation, in the face of these threats and in the light of the continuing boycott of British trade at Wanxian. In a

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<sup>89</sup> DOT, 1933, p.11.

<sup>90</sup> See the comment on negotiations about a syndicate on the Shanghai-Ningpo line which “have resulted (if in nothing else) in considerably more cordial relations”, BS Shanghai to JS London, 28/9/28, JSS III 2/7.

<sup>91</sup> Wright, *Coal Mining*, pp.128-31.

<sup>92</sup> J.W. Gibb, May 1931, “The Possibilities of Chemical Manufacture in China, Part 1, General Considerations”, ICI ICHO/REP/0486.

<sup>93</sup> Brodie, *Crescent*, p.80; Cochran, *Big Business*, pp.78-81.

<sup>94</sup> It represented “in concrete form friendly relations” between the companies, Allan Archer minute on C-in-C to Legation, 6/7/28, FO228\3767\3 11c.

<sup>95</sup> For the “subsidy” see BS Shanghai to JS London, 19/10/28, JSS 2/7; Clark, *Economic Rivalries in China*, pp.36-37.

<sup>96</sup> A.F. George, “Proposed Anglo-Chinese Shipping Concern”, 9/4/30, FO228\4273\15 63.

memorandum prepared by A.V.T. Dean the reasons for setting up the company were spelt out:

- A desire to try out Anglo-Chinese co-operation so as to have some idea before restrictive navigation legislation is enacted, of the best way to adapt ourselves to changed conditions not only above Ichang but elsewhere.
- To dispel the distrust felt for the Four Companies' motives on the Upper River - without this there can be no progress or prosperity on the run.
- Identify ourselves more closely with Chinese shipping circles and thereby
- minimize popular prejudice against our steamers.<sup>97</sup>

That the company came to be run on the Upper Yangzi rather than, as originally planned, the middle river, shows the politically expedient nature of these plans and negotiations; they became linked more to Swires' political problems on the Upper River, and the structure of their carrying trade, than to any long term goals.<sup>98</sup> For similar reasons in 1929 Arnholds set up the Upper Yangtze Engineering Works at Yichang as a subsidiary of their Shanghai-based New Engineering and Shipbuilding Works. Their site in Yichang was without the treaty port boundary, and a "Chinese facade" had to be created "involving local Chinese cooperation" to keep the project going.<sup>99</sup>

In face of the expected growth, with probable Government aid, of Chinese insurance companies, Swires decided to try and adapt themselves "to the course of events so as to turn it to our mutual advantage". In cooperation with Chen Guangfu's Shanghai Commercial and Savings Bank they founded the jointly owned Pao Foong Insurance Company. Despite praiseworthy reports of the honesty, *esprit de corps*, and quality of the bank's officials, trust extended as far as Swires trying to insist on an "annual audit of books by a British firm of chartered accountants" although this demand had to be dropped. That left Swires' interests, Shanghai mused, "at the mercy, and subject to the pleasure of a Board of Directors with a Chinese majority."<sup>100</sup>

Swires stole a march on other companies. Jardines rejected jointly owned companies in 1928 as unfeasible as "the Chinese would at once want things done their own way", while Chinese management would lead to abuses.<sup>101</sup> In 1931 Jardines appeared to their Hong Kong manager to be "left behind owing to their illiberal and

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<sup>97</sup> The four companies were Swires' China Navigation Company, Jardine's Indo-China Steam Navigation Company, the China Merchants and the Japanese Nippon Kisen Kaisha. "On proposed Anglo-Chinese S.S. Co." signed N.S. Brown, prepared by A.V.T. Dean, 7/2/30, FO228\4273\15 63, Dean was Shanghai manager of the China Navigation Company.

<sup>98</sup> See Lampson Diaries 11/10/28, for a conversation with T.J. Fisher of Swires on the importance of the Upper River trade as a "feeder" for the rest of the Yangzi River trade.

<sup>99</sup> Legation dossier 63n 1929, *passim.*, FO228\4043; H.H. Fox minute, 18/9/29, FO228\4043\12 63n; Teichman minute, 22/11/29, FO228\4043\13 63n.

<sup>100</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 11/6/30, JSS II 2/9; BS Shanghai to JS London, 25/7/30, JSS II 2/9; BS Shanghai to JS London, 27/2/31, JSS II 2/9; BS Shanghai to JS London, 8/5/31, JSS II 2/10.

<sup>101</sup> "Minutes of a meeting with acting Consul-General Garstin", BS Shanghai to JS London, 14/9/28, JSS III 2/7.

conservative attitude which they were adopting as contrasted with [Swires]”. His pleas in Shanghai for “some sort of co-operation” with the Chinese foundered on the attitude of the manager there. Lampson felt that they were “unwisely lagging behind” compared to the others who, if inland water navigation rights were withdrawn, “might to some extent have met trouble in advance by coming to some sort of arrangement for Chinese participation.”<sup>102</sup>

In May 1931 ICI felt that “manufacture in China... would greatly improve our position there” and structural cooperation with the Yong Li Soda Company seemed to be the answer, although a joint venture never materialised.<sup>103</sup> The same year Sir Hugo Cunliffe-Owen, Chairman of BAT, told Lampson that:

he was now forming, as a sort of subsidiary enterprise, a Chinese tobacco company... in case... the position of foreign controlled companies should become too difficult.<sup>104</sup>

Although three out of the four Sino-Foreign banks begun before 1932 had failed, the Standard Chartered Bank apparently had informal, tentative talks with Chen Guangfu about a possible complementary link in 1930.<sup>105</sup> Swires passed on to the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank a proposal, deemed to be “fantastic”, from their new Chinese friends for a Chinese Navigation Bank. Based in Hong Kong, the Bank’s approach was more conservative than the British companies in China. Its policy in the 1930s was to adapt itself and attempt “to prove its continued value to the Government of China”.<sup>106</sup>

Another aspect of cooperation was the involvement of leading Chinese figures as directors of companies or as participants in bodies previously restricted to European members. This was an especial feature of Victor Sassoon’s dramatic entry into the Shanghai business world. The International Investment Trust, set up in 1930, included many of the Chinese names on G.W. Swire’s “hit-list”. Sassoon’s Shanghai Land Investment Company also counted Yu Xiaqing as a director. Sassoon’s biggest investments were in property: in the long term he needed all the Chinese friends he could get.<sup>107</sup> Even the Shanghai Stock Exchange elected its first Chinese member in 1929.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Lampson Diaries 21/2/31, conversation with Patterson, *ibid.*, 27/3/31 conversation with John Keswick. When Keswick arrived in Shanghai in 1929 he immediately decided to learn to speak Chinese. In response the manager, B.D.F. Beith, commented: “Good idea - none of us do - but a good idea”, J. Keswick, “Two Decades in China”, M. Keswick, ed., *The Thistle and the Jade: A Celebration of 150 years of Jardine, Matheson and Company* (London, 1982), p.204.

<sup>103</sup> “The Possibilities of Chemical Manufacture in China”, ICI ICHO/REP/0486; Brodie, *Crescent*, pp.87-91.

<sup>104</sup> Lampson Diaries 27/3/31, conversation with Cunliffe-Owen. On the difficulties raised by the National Government’s economic and tariff policies for ICI see Reardon-Anderson, *Study of Change*, pp.278-85.

<sup>105</sup> Clark, *Economic Rivalries in China*, pp.76-77; Evans-Thomas, *Vanished China*, pp.156-63.

<sup>106</sup> A.B. Lowson to V.N. Grayburn, 28/10/30, *enc.*, Brown to Lowson, 21/10/30, HSB LOH I 103.247; BS Shanghai to JS London, 30/8/29, enclosure and marginal notations, JSS II 2/86; King *History*, Volume three, p.362.

<sup>107</sup> Zhang Zhongli and Chen Cengnian, *Shasun jituan zai jiu Zhongguo* (Beijing, 1985), pp.103-106; *Finance and Commerce*, 3/1/34, back cover; *Finance and Commerce*, 10/1/34, front cover.

Some of these moves were indicative of panic amongst the British business community. Mostly, they were evidence of a major shift in attitudes towards the Chinese as businessmen, and towards the nature of business in China. An aloof “Britishness”, and largely ceremonial personal relations with the Chinese, began to be replaced by a compromise relationship, based on the shared identification of key interests with specific individuals or interest groups.

## IV Reforming Company Structures

### British Staff

Attitudes and structures within British companies were also in need of analysis and reform. In chapter two it was shown how customary was denigration of Chinese abilities and status. E.M. Gull claimed in 1931 that there was even serious discrimination against Chinese businessmen in Britain itself.<sup>109</sup>

Swires and others were concerned about the characters of their men, managers or otherwise. In 1930 G.W. Swire stressed the need for a head of the China Navigation Company department who:

understands and acts on the present need for cultivating in and out of office and so educating Chinese ship-owners and businessmen. ...All this presupposes that the head of the Department finds it easy, if not congenial, to establish these personal relations... [A.V.T. Dean] was too direct in his manner to please the Chinese, who had spoken to Lamb about it... In other words when he caught a Chinese out in a mis-statement, he called it straight off a damned lie, instead of asking politely, whether there was not some misunderstanding. That is a fault which must be corrected.<sup>110</sup>

In 1929 E.J. Nathan, manager of the KMA in Tianjin, was anxious to have better-trained senior staff and also felt that bad labour relations at one mine were due to the manager there being “temperamentally unsuited for handling delicate situations, being far too excitable and irascible”.<sup>111</sup> Other companies were anxious to get rid of such dead wood, as they always had been if individuals got in the way of business. There was, however, a powerful political push to remove compromising personalities in the years after 1925.

Changing private attitudes among new staff and those who remained in China was difficult, if not impossible. Little things helped. Company house journals had long perpetuated the clichés of treaty port lore and opinion<sup>112</sup> and poked fun at the attempts of

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<sup>108</sup> *NCH*, 20/7/29, p.97.

<sup>109</sup> “Recently an important Chinese business institution [possibly the Central Bank of China] opened a branch in London with a small but picked staff of Chinese. The institution is one which it is greatly to our advantage to encourage in every way. The members of the staff are men of moderate means and cannot afford flats or expensive hotels. Place after place “turned them down” simply because they were “coloured””. Gull, *Facets*, p.195.

<sup>110</sup> G.W. Swire to J.K. Swire, 2/5/30, SP ADD 15.

<sup>111</sup> E.J. Nathan to P.C. Young 15/7/29, 24/7/29, E.J. Nathan Papers.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, *The Pipeline*, 6/5/25, p.114, 3/11/26, p.252, 9/2/27, pp.29-30, 15/6/27, pp.146-47.

Chinese and other foreign correspondents to write English. In 1931 the APC's *The Pipeline* announced that its column "Epistolary Eccentricities" was to be discontinued, it was "below the belt", especially given the poor linguistic standards of its British readership.<sup>113</sup> As has been shown in chapter 4, some of the commercial elite considered the problem of attitudes so intractable that it was only worth tackling in London, in particular amongst new recruits.<sup>114</sup> The efforts of E.R. Hughes and the DOT in 1932 were mis-timed. The following year the School of Oriental Studies annual report pointed out that there were fewer commercially-minded or employed students than was usual because of the depression.<sup>115</sup> Their efforts also dealt with the questions of understanding, attitude and behaviour. The lessons in etiquette on the curriculum of the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce's Chinese Language School were not enough.<sup>116</sup> Unlike business leaders and officials at the Board of Trade, Hughes was worried that the problem was only seen as one which was damaging British trade prospects, he felt that the solution, "a new cultural approach to China", was needed because "there is some point in being a gentleman." His moral concern was not widely shared, however.<sup>117</sup> Joseph Bailie suggested that Swires replaced their:

staff as they become superannuated, by young men who know the Chinese language, customs and manners, and who go out determined to retrieve the good name of Britishers in the Far East.<sup>118</sup>

In fact economics dictated that the new generation of men was recruited to supervise an expansion in Chinese employees, but similar skills and sensitivities were required. In 1931 BAT's Cunliffe-Owen told Lampson that:

the future of such enterprises as his lay in the development of the Chinese element. He was accordingly now going to concentrate on getting fewer foreigners; but these foreigners were to be men of good calibre, and must all of them have a good working knowledge of Chinese.<sup>119</sup>

After studying at the School of Oriental Studies BAT sent its men to Beijing for eighteen months language study.<sup>120</sup> The KMA was starting to think along similar lines, it wanted

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 18/3/31, p.99.

<sup>114</sup> It was a common editorial theme in the *China Express and Telegraph*, see 26/1/28, p.51; 30/8/28, p.615; 8/11/28, p.773; 22/11/28, pp.806-807. See also R.A. Bickers, *Changing Shanghai's "Mind": Publicity, Reform and the British in Shanghai, 1928-1931* (London, 1992), *passim*.

<sup>115</sup> SOS, *Report*, 1933, p.7.

<sup>116</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 4/1/29, JSS II 2/8.

<sup>117</sup> D. Landale, Mathesons, to Sir E. Crowe, 29/8/32, BT 60\31\5, DOT 27390\1932, 18, "Relations between Shanghai British and Chinese. Proposed issue of handbook for young visitors to China." E.R. Hughes to Sir E. Crowe, 15/12/32, *ibid.*, 65.

<sup>118</sup> JS London BS Hong Kong and Shanghai, 11/5/28, JSS II 2/7.

<sup>119</sup> Lampson Diaries, 27/3/31.

<sup>120</sup> Logan, *China*, pp.5, 50.

to recruit tactful men who already had Chinese language ability; learning the language on the job was not good enough.<sup>121</sup> Swires planned to send men to Nanjing for similar reasons, after office-hours cramming for an exam carrying a financial bonus did not work.<sup>122</sup>

### The Compradore

When discussing the treatment of Dr.T.Z.K. Woo [see page 7], Joseph Bailie went on to lay a large part of the blame for such attitudes on the structure of Swires' business:

May I say that I believe the crux of the situation is the present system of transacting business through Compradores... your hands are tied in your attempts to make the proper friendly gestures to the Chinese.

This point was also stressed by Chinese businessmen themselves, for example, by Chen Guangfu in conversation with Warren Swire in 1929.<sup>123</sup>

Many British businessmen also felt that the compradore system needed replacing or modernising. Scandals and inefficiency provided further reasons; in 1927 the Hongkong Bank's Beijing compradore absconded with around \$1.4 million that had been paid in only as far as the compradoric "bank within a bank".<sup>124</sup> This revealed the essential problem of indirect control, especially as Chinese customers tended to identify the compradore more closely with his foreign company than was actually the case under the existing system.<sup>125</sup>

There were other reasons:

In the latish 1920s the compradores tended to lose their grip... chaotic political conditions... and all that kind of thing and the[y]... tended to be squeezed a little bit one way or the other,

remarked one ex-taipan in the 1980s. Although a former Swire director remarked that "there were times when they found it financially advantageous all the same."<sup>126</sup> However advantageous, the trend in business was towards more direct contacts between buyers and

<sup>121</sup> E.J. Nathan to P.C. Young, 24/7/29, E.J. Nathan Papers.

<sup>122</sup> J.K. Swire to N.S. Brown, 19/3/30, 16/6/30, and enclosure, SP ADD 15. Swires chose Nanjing because the nightlife in Beijing had proved too much for one of the BAT men, G.W. Swire to J.K. Swire, 9/5/30, SP ADD 15; Logan, *China*, p.9; Lister, "Memoirs", p.14.

<sup>123</sup> JS London BS Hong Kong and Shanghai, 11/5/28, JSS II 2/7; G.W. Swire to J.K. Swire, 8/2/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>124</sup> King, *History*, Volume three, p.352. The Bank was unlucky with compradores throughout its history, see Carl Smith, "The Compradores of the Hong Kong Bank", King, ed., *Eastern Banking*, pp.93-111.

<sup>125</sup> Amongst others in 1928 the CNCo's Hongkong compradore admitted to making, with his subcontractors, excess profits of over \$815,000 over the previous 5 years. "Four wives and an easygoing nature" were blamed for Khoo's indebtedness and disappearance from Xiamen in 1934/5, whilst Chen Zhaorui in 1932 had faced "forced liquidation tantamount [to] bankrupt[cy]"; BS Hong Kong to JS London, 27/6/28, SP ADD 19; ST - 13 p.37; BS Shanghai to JS London, 13/5/32, SP ADD 19.

<sup>126</sup> ST - 14 p.2; ST - 19 p.23.

sellers, which bypassed the commissions of the agency houses like Swires and of their compradores' organisations. Increasing competition from Chinese and foreign companies made for much more complex business which required strict delineations of business and control which the compradoric partnership failed to deliver.<sup>127</sup> Improvements in relations with the Chinese business community also came at the expense of the compradores. At Sassoons, for example, the role of the compradore declined steadily in the interwar period.<sup>128</sup>

Swires' cost-conscious response was to attempt to set up a system of salaried "Chinese Managers", whose time and work would be fully committed to the firm and would be fully integrated into its structure. This was accompanied by a concerted drive to reclaim sensitive areas of business from compradoric control. Labour contracts were farmed out through compradores and efforts were made, for financial reasons, to find the true levels of costs and investigate the savings possible through direct hire. European indifference was no longer cost-effective.<sup>129</sup> This was paralleled by moves to reassert total control over all aspects of Swires' shipping business. It accompanied moves elsewhere in the Swire organisation to cut out contractors and compradores, and thereby become more responsive to the conditions and demands of Chinese passengers. Foreign travelling inspectors were introduced in 1928 (and were moved from ship to ship to offset the danger of bribery). Their job was to check that compradores remitted earnings in full. With the development of new ships in the early 1930s European pursers took over the duties of the compradores as they affected the first class Chinese passengers. Swires failed to get rid of the tea boys, union power was too strong.<sup>130</sup>

British companies were also aware of how firms from other nations treated their staff, German businesses for example, or American insurance companies which in 1928 did not:

work very much through the old Compradore and agent type, but through Foreign educated men who are members of their own staff, and have titles such as Branch or Departmental Manager. These men have a standing which is flattering to them and which gives them "face" with their countrymen";

This also enabled the Americans to keep a closer watch on squeeze. Another report cited an:

<sup>127</sup> See for example DOT, 1928 p.62, and later reports, *passim*.; on complexity see ST - 13 pp.38-39.

<sup>128</sup> Zhang, *Shasun tuanji*, p.141.

<sup>129</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai/Hong Kong, 27/4/28, JSS III 2/7; Alfred Holt and Co to JS London, 5/4/28 and enclosures, JSS XI 1/6.

<sup>130</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 16/3/28, JSS III 2/7; BS Shanghai to JS London, 4/5/28, JSS III 2/7; BS Shanghai to JS London, 5/4/29, JSS III 2/8 JSS III 2/8; BS Shanghai to JS London, 9/8/29, JSS III 2/8; BS Shanghai to JS London, 24/10/30, JSS III 2/10; BS Shanghai to JS London, 28/11/30, JSS III 2/10. On the teaboys see the file JSS X 1/3; Other companies planned similar changes, the China Merchants, in one of its frequent reorganisations promised to rid itself of compradores and tea boys in 1936, *Oriental Affairs*, March 1936, pp.133-35.



interesting illustration of German methods towards Chinese [which] was observed in the shape of a gold watch carried by [compradore Chang Peilin] bearing his monogram in enamel, a gift of appreciation from Arnholds for some successful deal.<sup>131</sup>

There were also attempts at Swires to identify their compradores more closely with the company by allowing them room in a section of the Shanghai Private Office Suite. The following year J.K. Swire informed London that another British manager had decided:

to have his Compradore to sit in his room with him; he is a long way the best of the young school and the sort of man that it will pay to treat as a colleague.<sup>132</sup>

Insurance was the area chosen by Swires' for introducing this managerial system. Their insurance business was under threat from foreign competition, whilst the old-style compradores considered the work beneath them. Swires also distrusted the Chinese agents feeling that they, like all Chinese, were likely to be corrupted by local elites and relatives.<sup>133</sup> To counter this a new, young Chinese Insurance Organisation was installed. This was also designed to handle the rapid growth of potential of the industry in the 1920's, especially as town improvement schemes opened up more towns to commercially less hazardous business.<sup>134</sup> Chinese clerks took over routine work and freed foreign staff to drum up and inspect new business.<sup>135</sup> Swires also took other new measures to reform their traditional workings and save money. They planned to appoint a Chinese agent in Zhenjiang in 1929. In 1931 their Weihaiwei agency was given to a Chinese firm, with an English-speaking manager, instead of a foreign agency, saving them an estimated \$2,000. A similar office was planned for Guangzhou and this was felt to be the future pattern for the outports.<sup>136</sup>

## Sinification

Replacing the comprador involved integrating his staff into the existing British structure whilst recruiting new men not tainted with old fashioned ways. "A buck

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<sup>131</sup> On American companies see BS Shanghai to JS London, 2/3/28 enc. BS Shanghai to all ports, "Insurance", 15/2/28, JSS II 2/7; For the watch see BS Shanghai to JS London, 14/2/28 enc. A.D. Gallows "Upper River: Future Policy in Szechwan", p.19, JSS III 2/7. Arnholds was, of course, a British registered company at this point.

<sup>132</sup> G.W. Swire to C.C. Scott 31/1/29, SP ADD 15; J.K. Swire to G.W. Swire, 10/5/30, SP ADD 15.

<sup>133</sup> ST - 16 p.25; Hamilton was told by a Mr. Fleming, an American lawyer in Shanghai (and resident for 21 years), that the Chinese considered arson "a perfectly legitimate way of enriching themselves at the Insurance Company's expense," Hamilton Papers, Journal, 12/11/27.

<sup>134</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 2/10/31 p.4, JSS II 2/10.

<sup>135</sup> BS Hong Kong to JS London, 5/9/30, JSS II 2/9.

<sup>136</sup> G.W. Swire to J.K. Swire, 8/2/29, SP ADD 15; BS Shanghai to JS London, 23/1/31, JSS III 2/11; BS Hong Kong to JS London, 1/6/28, JSS II 2/7; JS London to BS Shanghai, 9/8/29, JSS III 2/8. By 1932 only the APC's agent in Zhenjiang was British, *Directory of China and Japan*, 1932.

Chinese over the whole lot/Insurance dept. to learn Chinese” were the options Warren Swire scribbled on a letter dealing with the future of the Chinese insurance organisation. There were “obstructionists” among managers in China who were opposed to employing Chinese in formerly European posts.<sup>137</sup> Swires’ man in Shantou declared in 1931 that, as he was old-fashioned, as his Chinese staff were old-fashioned, and as his customers were old-fashioned, he failed to see the need for change. London were always afraid that change would be merely cosmetic, with due cause: the Yichang Chinese Manager’s 1935 contract reads much like any older compradore contract.<sup>138</sup> Old segregationist thinking found the employment of Chinese to previously-European staffed positions difficult to accommodate.<sup>139</sup>

There were tremendous potential savings to be made from employing “good class Chinese” (“none are overpaid at present” was a J.K. Swire understatement in 1930) especially as it was reported as early as 1925 that there were “very few jobs of a routine nature which can not be done as well, if not better, by good Chinese or by women clerks”. Unlike women clerks, Chinese employees would not leave their jobs on getting married. In early 1925 Swires had talked enthusiastically of recruiting a “definite class of “B and S Chinese”... and getting the reputation among educated Chinese of being the firm to get into”. Added impetus, in the shape of immediate political and, more especially, economic crisis, was needed before this was properly embarked upon. As Swires remarked in 1928, “there is a limit beyond which it no longer pays to employ foreigners.”<sup>140</sup> Appointing Chinese as agents in the smaller treaty ports would allow

<sup>137</sup> Marginal notation on BS Shanghai to JS London, 2/3/28, JSS II 2/7; on obstructionists see G.W. Swire to JS London, [February] 1929, SP ADD 15.

<sup>138</sup> For defenders of the system see: Mackintosh to N.S. Brown 28/3/30 on “Running Nanking without a Compradore”, JSS ADD 15; King, *History*, Volume three, p.348. For opposition in Swatow see C.C. Scott to JSS, 19/6/31, JSS I 3/6; for expected slowness see ST - 20 p.7: “the system continued to be a little “compradoric” for quite a long time afterwards”. For the Yichang compradore’s contract see Compradore’s Security Book 1904-1937, p.154, JSS I 8/3. Also in Shantou, which appears to have been a hot bed of business reaction, Jardine’s manager was described as having been “a dyed in the wool old China hand... he would sort of frown on any fraternising with the Chinese or anything like that”, ST - 20 p.21.

<sup>139</sup> Integration was a problem raised by employing Chinese ships’ engineers. In initial plans for the CNCo ships *Wuhu* and *Wusueh* the 3rd Engineer’s cabin was placed aft, amongst the Chinese crew. Even though ships’ crews were rigidly stratified, race would still transcend class and status in this plan, and a Chinese would still be cabined amongst Chinese. Furthermore it was wondered whether he would be Chinese, as it was such a complicated and modern ship. Eventually it was decided to furnish the room in a “manner suitable for a European third engineer” and Shanghai came to the conclusion that perhaps he should be amongst his “professional kind”, JS London to BS Shanghai, 12/7/29, JSS III 2/8; BS Shanghai to JS London 5/7/29, JSS III 2/8. Even so, *Wuhu* was to have a bath and w.c. solely for the use of the 3rd engineer and the Chinese pilot; professional integration did not extend as far as the bath or the toilet. (Incidentally, latrine provision for the pilot was a new idea, on many ships he’d had to make his way to the Chinese passenger latrines when circumstances and rapids allowed.)

<sup>140</sup> J.K. Swire to JS London, 20/5/30, SP ADD 15; J.K. Swire to JS London, 5/6/25, SP ADD 15; it was estimated that the savings from employing a full time Chinese pilot instead of relying on the Pilots Association to provide one could be 600 taels a month in Shanghai, BS Shanghai to Alfred Holt and Co., 21/11/30, JSS II 2/9; JS London to Alfred Holt and Co., 27/4/28, JSS XI 1/6. As part of its emergency reorganisation after 1933 ICI cut down its foreign staff by 20%, Chinese staff costs were so low that no worthwhile savings could be made by pruning them, Brodie, *Crescent*, pp.185-86.

British staff to be used where they could be most effective and where the lonely hazards of outpost life, which could undermine their usefulness, could be avoided.<sup>141</sup>

By 1930 the formation of a Chinese House Staff replacing foreign staff at Swires was in full swing, their loyalty assured by good salaries.<sup>142</sup> Progress was such that the Shanghai Office was worried that it had very little margin for sickness and relief amongst the British staff.<sup>143</sup> An attempt was made to apply to Chinese applicants the same class-criteria that were applied to British staff. It was felt that “the House Staff, must be recruited in very much the same way as the foreign staff i.e. partly from the University, partly from the Public Schools and partly from the Grammar Schools”.<sup>144</sup> There was a rationale to this, beyond an attempt to perpetuate as much as possible the character of treaty port business life. Personality problems were often raised by the old-fashioned compradores and by some of their old-fashioned replacements. Nepotism may have produced employees with excellent references, but it did not guarantee their ability. Opium-smoking mandarin types were unlikely to be taken seriously by conservative foreigners.<sup>145</sup> Westernized young Chinese, in a radical departure from the usual prejudices, were seen as offering the best hope.

Sinification took place in other companies and paralleled changes in such British-dominated institutions as the CMC, the Salt Gabelle and the Shanghai Pilots Association, albeit much more slowly.<sup>146</sup> BAT, for instance, could already boast a reasonably thorough integration of Chinese into much of the company’s structure. It made much of this itself in its own publications.<sup>147</sup> In fact the company relied on Chinese in all parts of its business for its success, but by contrast industrial management remained the preserve of foreigners whilst Chinese were left as clerks, distributors and advertisers.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore with the Anglicization of BAT’s management in the 1920’s “the entire organisation seems to have become even more dependant on Chinese than it had been under American executive leadership”, which says much about British attitudes to management as well as to the Chinese.<sup>149</sup> Sinification at BAT was a political response to *Guomindang* pressure.

<sup>141</sup> One young Briton “was rather shaken by his lonely [eight month] vigil at Shasi and should not be kept on the river too long”, J.K. Swire to N.S. Brown, 19/3/30, SP ADD 15.

<sup>142</sup> J.K. Swire to JS London, 5/6/25, SP ADD 15; J.H. Robertson to J.R. Hobhouse, 21/12/28, JSS XI 1/6.

<sup>143</sup> C.C. Scott to J.K. Swire 24/6/31, JSS I 3/6 p.137b.

<sup>144</sup> J.K. Swire to JS London, 3/3/30, SP ADD 15. A Chinese student studying at Oxford was interviewed in 1929, J.K. Swire to G.W. Swire, 5/4/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>145</sup> Perfume wearers too, see Consul Harding’s splenetic descriptions of Jardine’s Changsha agent Ching: “a perfume reeking, opium sot and congenial idiot”, whom he refused to see, H.I. Harding to Lampson, S/O, 10/7/30, enc., Harding to A.E. Smith, 19/6/30, FO228\4276\2 63b1.

<sup>146</sup> George Philip, *The Log of the Shanghai Pilot Service 1831-1932* (Shanghai, 1932), pp.185, VI.

<sup>147</sup> Cochran, *Big Business*, pp.22-40; “The B.A.T. were probably the first of the big companies in China to realise the possibilities of Chinese accountants and Chinese clerks and to give them positions of importance and trust.”, *Yueh Pao*, 1st September 1923, pp.34, 33; (Interestingly in this bilingual company magazine the more prominent text is the Chinese and the magazine is bound and numbered in the Chinese fashion.)

<sup>148</sup> Cochran, *Big Business*, p.213, p.134.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p.165.

In late 1927 “the company temporarily stopped sending new American representatives to China and permanently appointed Chinese to fill many posts in the company’s marketing system previously held by Westerners” though it still kept industrial management in Western hands.<sup>150</sup> The new generation of Western inspectors was recruited to supervise this expansion.<sup>151</sup>

Distrust of Chinese employees did not just centre on their questionable loyalty and honesty. Their competence was automatically seen as a problem and so was their reputed inability to take on responsibilities. For technical staff this partly resulted from restrictive practices - mostly, but not only, sins of omission - that prevented Chinese from employment in certain foreign dominated fields (the Shanghai Pilot Service for example). Active foreign involvement in training and employing Chinese engineers was also lacking. This resulted in a shortage of young Chinese trained in practical fields along Western lines, a fact always alluded to by opponents of sinification.<sup>152</sup>

As a result of political pressure, and the efforts of industrial reformers such as Joseph Bailie, this pattern began to change in the late 1920s. Private companies and the public utilities in Shanghai began to accept Chinese apprentices and also to employ them after training.<sup>153</sup> Some foreign firms worked directly with the FBI/China Association scheme whilst Hong Kong University’s engineering graduates began to be more widely accepted.<sup>154</sup> As a result of this increase in trained Chinese engineers the KMA, for example, were able to replace many foreign staff after 1934.<sup>155</sup> Swires closed down their Hong Kong Sugar Refinery in 1928 for a major restructuring and sinification of employment there, largely in a bid to cut costs.<sup>156</sup> Swires in the 1930s also employed their first Chinese wireless operators, accountants and wharfingers; both of the latter jobs required them to trust their Chinese staff in ways traditional attitudes about Chinese honesty did not allow.<sup>157</sup> Chinese ships’ officers had been used on the Upper Yangzi in times of trouble for pragmatic and insurance reasons. By 1930 Chinese shippers, who wanted the cheapest shipping rates for their goods, were also objecting to the *costs* of

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., pp.193, 213.

<sup>151</sup> Logan, *China*, pp.1, 50.

<sup>152</sup> H.W. Robertson to Alfred Holt and Co., 9/10/28, JSS XI 1/6; Other resistance came from the Shanghai Pilots Association which gracelessly felt that it “had no option but to comply” with the request of the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce backed by the Consular Body when it agreed to take on Chinese pilots again after 60 years without. One was appointed in 1928 and another in 1930; see Philip, *Log of the Shanghai Pilot Service*, pp.185, vi; see, for example, *Finance and Commerce*, 31/1/34, p.123, “Are there too many College Graduates in China?”; This was also an echo of the general situation within Chinese technical and scientific professions. The geography (urban and coastal) and small numbers of establishments employing graduates prompted many to abandon science for other fields, Reardon-Anderson, *Study of Change*, pp.177-85.

<sup>153</sup> G.W. Swire to JS London, 17/5/29, SP ADD 15.

<sup>154</sup> On the FBI scheme see chapter 4; on HKU see C.A. Middleton Smith, ““Practical Chinese Engineers”: The Demand and the Supply”, *Far Eastern Review*, July 1930, pp.344-48.

<sup>155</sup> Wright, *Coal Mining*, p.131.

<sup>156</sup> BS Hong Kong to JS London, 17/7/28, SP ADD 19.

<sup>157</sup> ST - 13, p.37; BS Shanghai to JS London, 9/10/31, JSS II 2/10.

foreign officers.<sup>158</sup> Dodwells also experimented, to see if “reliable Chinese employees... are obtainable” and what savings they could lead to.<sup>159</sup>

Swires experimented with one J.C.L Wong, who was trained as an engineer in Liverpool and sent out to Hong Kong in 1928:

Keep a watch on Wong, see that he is given as many jobs as possible to give you a line on his sense of responsibility, initiative and force of character-the characteristics, where most Chinese fail - and generally have him tried out... Even if Wong does not eventually enter our service, we shall have to employ many of his like in the near future, if only for reasons of economy.

Wong was not tested on his skills as an engineer, but by the dictates of another agenda, sinification in the face of distrust and prejudice from British treaty port staff. He was to prove an initial disappointment:

As a draughtsman Mr. Wong is excellent but on practical work his knowledge is very limited which of course is only to be expected... His knowledge is increasing of course but it will be some time before Mr. Wong could be left in charge of work of any magnitude... he does not possess the characteristics necessary if he is to be looked upon as a likely candidate for a post where he will be called upon to give directions to British personnel.<sup>160</sup>

C.P. Wong, however, at the Hongkong Taikoo Sugar Refinery was spoken of very highly but then he was:

a type of Chinese, which it would be difficult to duplicate... he has stood up well to the foreigners at the refinery... apparently quite willing to make suggestions on his own... proved himself quite capable of continuing a day's work which Farrel has started... apparently Farrel would go down to the refinery in the morning, leaving Wong to do his work, and then in the afternoon they would change places.<sup>161</sup>

### **Chinese Labour**

Political events, especially the anti-British boycott movement after the May 30th incident and the Hong Kong-Guangzhou strike, had shown the importance of good labour relations. In 1927 ICI were eager to build houses for its Chinese workforce “as a means

<sup>158</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 7/2/30, JSS III 2/9; BS Shanghai to JS London, 2/5/30, JSS III 2/9.

<sup>159</sup> Minutes of Directors Meetings, Dodwell and Co., Ltd., 19/12/29; 20/2/30, Inchcape Papers, MS 27,498/4.

<sup>160</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 10/2/28, JSS II 2/7; BS Shanghai to JS London, enc. BS Hongkong to Alfred Holt and Co. 25/1/29. He was kept busy on “painting and deck work” being “very useful in that capacity”, JSS II 2/8 1st half.

<sup>161</sup> G.W. Swire to JSS 11/1/29, SP ADD 15.

of retaining their goodwill”; they established a free staff-restaurant whilst Swires were eager to remind their Hong Kong managers of the political reasons for educating the children of their workforce.<sup>162</sup> Swires also made some concessions towards conditions on board ships for the crews, and broke ranks with the more conservative Jardines in a pay settlement with the seamen’s union in 1930.<sup>163</sup> BAT suffered from major strike action, much of it political, in the 1920s. In the mid-1930s close links with the Nationalists enabled British companies to have strikes settled in their favour, either by the Social Affairs Bureau of Greater Shanghai in that city, or more directly elsewhere.<sup>164</sup>

### **Integrating passengers**

The best recorded, and probably most visible, example of attempts to alter the treatment of Chinese customers was provided by the debates about restructuring passenger accommodation on British steamers.

As well as starting to integrate (or re-title) their staff, Swires made moves to integrate their passengers. Jardines were already doing so on some of their ships. In mid-1928 the Swire discussion centred largely on converting existing ship superstructures. Shanghai rejected change in January, but London wrote in August that in the future: “there will be no question in China of foreign or Chinese first class accommodation and therefore we had better meet probable future market requirements now”.<sup>165</sup>

Integration in existing ships raised some basic problems and encouraged paternalistic segregationism. The Hankou office claimed, in 1928, that “they don’t want our food forced on them” and “we must give them what they want” and “provide space for the Oriental and the Occidental.”<sup>166</sup> Next year Shanghai paid lip-service to the principle, but their objections to de-segregating the Guangzhou-Hongkong-Shanghai ocean route mixed economics and prejudice: “foreign passengers would not travel... if they had to feed in a Chinese saloon... under conditions which we could not avoid-i.e. the normal lower middle class Chinese idea of comfort and ease”. Perhaps, it was suggested, tickets for the combined foreign/Chinese first class could only be bought “through our office on personal application, so that the standard of cleanliness, etc. be kept up.”<sup>167</sup>

The CNCo ships *Wuhu* and *Wusueh* were to be a new generation with accommodation supposedly reflecting the shift in Swires’ thinking by the end of the

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<sup>162</sup> “The Reorganisation of Sales Arrangements by ICI in China”, 28/10/27, ICI ICHO/CFD/0139 (ii); G.W. Swire to J.S. Scott, 31/5/31, SP ADD 15.

<sup>163</sup> Shanghai No.330, 2/12/30, FO228\4263\1 55c; Hong Kong No.61, 5/12/30 and enclosed “Confidential Report of the Indo-China Steam Navigation Company,” FO228\4263\2 55c.

<sup>164</sup> Cochran, *Big Business*, pp.137-40, 177-79, 186, 192-94; See Osterhammel, “Imperialism in Transition”, p.278.

<sup>165</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 21/9/28, JSS III 2/7.

<sup>166</sup> D.H. Whamond to C.C. Knight, 30/7/28, in BS Shanghai to JS London, 10/8/28, JSS III 2/7.

<sup>167</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 11/1/29, “Notes on Discussions Regarding New Tonnage Held at Hongkong on 2nd January 1929”, JSS III 2/8.

1920's. An Intermediate Saloon was designed<sup>168</sup> and economising on the fittings was warned against due to the attention to such details expected by "the growing numbers of Chinese who both demand and are willing to pay for comfort on the European Standard". The first class accommodation was to be managed by a foreign purser and his Chinese staff, and was not included in the compradore's contract. Chinese passengers wishing to travel saloon class would buy their tickets at the foreign agent's office. Whether this was to give the passengers face or to check their personal appearance is not recorded.<sup>169</sup>

The new arrangements amounted to a clumsy attempt to pander to European expectations of segregation and Chinese consumer demands and was not successful. The Intermediate Saloon was too expensive and only 10% of its capacity was used, First Class accommodation was bathless and bedding-less and was soon put back into the compradore's hands, but earnings from Chinese passengers were too low. Classes were regraded: "It only means changing the labels on the doors" wrote Warren Swire, and the designation Cabin Class came up with. The nomenclature was confusing, Swires were confused, so were their customers. "First Class" is certainly apt to be confused with "Saloon", and it is difficult to get away from the inevitable "Chinese" in describing it, to avoid misunderstandings" was one comment.<sup>170</sup>

Jardines' Indo-China line pipped Swires with the *Pao Wo*, built in 1931 as a river steamer and described as innovatory because all the passenger accommodation was on the same deck (steerage apart), and there was no purely Chinese accommodation of the traditional type.<sup>171</sup> On Swires' new Shanghai-Tianjin steamer, *Shengkin*, this meant that the "First Class Accommodation (Chinese)" should "be equipped in all respects nearly as well as the saloon, [as] we may be carrying foreign passengers here at times". Whatever changes may have occurred two standards of comfort were seen to be the norm.<sup>172</sup>

Class names certainly referred as a shorthand to the facilities offered rather than to the passengers themselves. But the evidence shows that it was largely assumed that East ate East and West ate West and the two would find it impossible to eat together or share the use of a bathroom or lounge.<sup>173</sup> It was expected in Shanghai that Europeans

<sup>168</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 24/4/31, JSS III 2/11.

<sup>169</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 18/4/30, JSS III 2/9.

<sup>170</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 15/5/31, JSS III 2/11; BS Shanghai to JS London 19/6/31, JSS III 2/11.

<sup>171</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 27/3/31, JSS III 2/11, and *Far Eastern Review*, November 1930, pp.655-56.

<sup>172</sup> "Doubtful" noted Warren Swire in a marginal comment on BS Shanghai to JS London 13/3/31, JSS III 2/11; For the new steamer's specifications see BS Shanghai to JS London 28/11/30, JSS III 2/10. Special provision had to be made for passenger's amahs as "passengers, particularly those with children, refuse to allow their amahs to sleep in the Chinese passenger accommodation, with the result that they sleep on saloon deck."

<sup>173</sup> The problem may well be that the planners were secretly as ashamed of Western food in China as the Chinese would have been disgusted by it. The standard BAT mess meal was: "a thin consomme, breaded veal cutlet, rice, a boiled vegetable and a sticky pastry. English cooking --the flavour cooked out -- with the inevitable Lee and Perrin's Sauce" James L. Hutchinson, *China Hand* (Boston, Massachusetts, 1936), p.20. Lee and Perrins almost uniquely stayed at a stable price level between 1918 and 1928, *NCH*, 21/4/28, p.103.

would not wish to sail in a mixed Saloon class because of the Chinese company.]<sup>174</sup> The salient point, that Chinese passengers were the increasingly important market, was often blurred by the wish, fostered throughout treaty port socialisation, to protect the exclusivity of British treaty port life.

## V Conclusion - The Limits of Reform

There were significant concrete moves towards abandoning the exclusive traditional structures of many aspects of British business in China after the Nationalist Revolution. This process was compounded by Chinese economic development and the world economic depression. Pragmatic analyses of the nature of the Chinese as competitors, clients, employees and colleagues began to be substituted for those based on popular attitudes which informed the old complacent system. This process continued slowly throughout the 1930s. The rhetoric of Sino-British friendship became closer to the reality of Sino-British social relations than it had previously been.

The years 1928 to 1931 were a period of transition. Most of the structures and attitudes questioned were unresolved by 1931 and many were still unresolved by the time of the Sino-Japanese and Pacific wars.<sup>175</sup> The period 1925 to 1927 had been one of panicky belligerence. Peace after 1928 brought more panic, but panicky reform and the removal of “conspicuous grievances” from wherever they could no longer be defended. This process went together with attempts to alter the national character of businesses as much as necessary but as little as possible. Foreigners were conspicuous in China and easy targets for political or criminal attacks. Partial indigenisation of company personnel and character, if it could be effected (and the easiest way was to create joint companies) was a good insurance, for example, against unpredictable, and by 1931 extremely powerful, political boycotts.<sup>176</sup>

There was a widespread initial hostility to cooperation with Chinese businessmen, many of whom after the May 30th incident had been involved in business and political forums seen as hostile to the British, such as the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. Nevertheless, by 1933 Swires’ new Shanghai manager was to be chosen first and foremost for his ability to mix with the Chinese.<sup>177</sup> It is clear that sinification was both a political and economic necessity. It was introduced haphazardly and in the context of persistent old attitudes. G.W. Swire was not sure Chinese store keepers could, as such, be

<sup>174</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai, 28/3/30, JSS III 2/9.

<sup>175</sup> In the long-term the compradores were replaced. Jardines first appointed a Chinese manager to their private office in 1945. The Hongkong Bank did not feel the need to change the comprador’s title until 1960. Their last comprador continued his old work under his new name for 5 years but was not replaced, Yen Ping-Hao, “The Compradores”, Keswick, ed., *Thistle and the Jade*, p.98; Smith “Compradores of the Hongkong Bank” in King, *Eastern Banking*, p.99.

<sup>176</sup> For their short-term effectiveness see Remer, *Study of Chinese Boycotts*, *passim*.

<sup>177</sup> G.W. Swire to J.S. Scott, 17/2/33, JSS I 3/6.



trusted, and Chinese midshipmen were “good pieces of machinery” but he doubted “their guts in an emergency”; it was often felt that the new European employees needed to supervise the new Chinese workforces negated the cost savings.<sup>178</sup> Both the wider debate about conciliation, adaptation and cooperation, and the more practical discussion of sinification of staff involved a continuous, if not always openly-stated, awareness of Chinese “characteristics”; only occasionally was this a misnomer for Chinese culture, habits or customs, social, business or otherwise.

For all the friendliness displayed at managerial and elite level, integration was passively resisted by British workforces, and its impact was softened, where possible, for European customers. For all of the advantages of employing Chinese in British businesses, in terms of propaganda, cost savings and the dangers of employing conspicuous foreign staff, the social and racial prejudice against accepting Chinese as equal militated against the bulk of the community effectively adapting itself to the situation, and also to the wider question of the growth of a Western-leaning Chinese middle class. In 1931, faced with a worsening depression and the need for “effecting economic readjustment by all concerned”, J.K. Swire recommended a 10% flat reduction of salaries and directors fees. London agreed but also suggested that, senior staff apart, all passages to and from home should be second class. Shanghai replied that:

House 2nd class accommodation very limited standard inferior passengers undesirable many orientals therefore our opinion is everyone will pay themselves difference defeating essential object encourage individual economy.<sup>179</sup>

The objection was partly snobbish: “any passage which is not called “second class” is unobjectionable”, but the prejudice was tangible and expected by the management.<sup>180</sup>

Problems also arose from the continuing social segregation and feelings of racial superiority. What, for example, was young Hong Cha in Shanghai going to call his foreign colleagues? “He probably called the others nothing at all, in order to avoid the “Mr.” or the name without the “Mr.”, replied Warren Swire,

though he does not wine and dine with them, he does ask them to play tennis etc. at his house and probably that is the best way of starting the kind of relationship we want.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> G.W. Swire to JS London, 11/1/29, SP ADD 15; G.W. Swire to C.C. Scott, 21/11/28, SP ADD 15; JSS I 3/6 C.C. Scott to G.W. Swire, 21/8/31. A thorough investigation of the possibilities was undertaken by Swires in 1933-34, ST - 14, pt.2, p.3.

<sup>179</sup> Private Telegrams, from Shanghai, 18/6/31; to Shanghai, 24/6/31; from Shanghai, 26/6/31; to Shanghai, 26/6/31, 30/6/31, SP ADD 19.

<sup>180</sup> C.C. Scott to J.K. Swire, 24/6/31, JSS I 3/6.

<sup>181</sup> G.W. Swire to JSS, 1/2/29, SP ADD 15; for another example of the power of the traditional relationships see the description of a Chinese pilot on probation who “lacks confidence in himself, being frightened to tell a foreign Master what is the best thing to do when the situation arises”. BS Shanghai to Managing Directors P and O SNGCo., 21/11/30, JSS II 2/9.

The social taboos among non-managerial staff were still rarely disturbed except on a ritualistic level, and the tennis-party was the prime example of the newer, more intimate, but still ritualistic, get-together.<sup>182</sup>

The strong sense of community and nationalism exhibited by the British in China also caused problems. Their self-ascribed standards were threatened by the concessions beginning to be made to the Chinese. Companies knew that their compradores could commit business abuses that would be assumed to be instigated by the British management. Swires, for example, were keen to get their compradores to “understand our scruples” and strongly believed that the reliability of their own business ethics was a strong advantage in trade in China.<sup>183</sup> This often-stated belief in the attractiveness of British honesty to the Chinese was related to wider paternalistic ideas about British policy and activities in China.<sup>184</sup> It was a core communal myth. The danger of the new generation of businessmen’s much-heralded “greater understanding of, and sympathy with the Chinese” was best articulated by the hostile H.G.W. Woodhead:

In the past the British merchant has gained a reputation for integrity and scrupulousness. Is he, in future, to resort to wholesale bribery to secure “justice” against defaulting creditors...?<sup>185</sup>

In fact the whole process of arranging Sino-British companies and closer “cooperation” entailed an abandonment of some of the tenets of previous British practice. The need to openly identify British interests with those of Chinese business and the National Government was incompatible with the traditional apartness and neutrality practised by the British. It was much closer to the standard relationship between Chinese companies and their de facto local authorities.<sup>186</sup>

There was, then, confusion about the type of market businesses ought to target. Should they follow up on their structural integration in and dependence on the China trade, and truly sinify their public face and priorities, or else should they cling on to their Britishness and colonial trappings? Jardines and the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank had their headquarters in colonial Hong Kong and were initially less willing to compromise

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<sup>182</sup> For other examples of tennis diplomacy see the efforts of Stella Benson’s husband, Benson Diaries, 22/11/29, 23/11/29, 9/2/30; the limit of this socialising was revealed when several of the players were also invited for dinner: “except for tennis, they had nothing in common”, *ibid.*, 17/3/30; see also Money Penny Papers, “Ningpo more far”, p.30.

<sup>183</sup> JS London to BS Shanghai and Hong Kong, 11/5/28 and encs., JSS II 2/7; BS Shanghai to JS London, 21/12/28 and encs., JSS III 2/7. This self-assurance was confirmed by, for example, leaked letters showing routine short measuring by a Danish firm with mainly German trade, Jebsen and Co., in Guangzhou, BS Hong Kong to Alfred Holt and Co., 27/7/28 and enclosures, JSS II 2/7.

<sup>184</sup> In later years J.T. Pratt echoed this belief; see his comments about the attractiveness of the British commercial approach in J.T. Pratt to B.D. Beith, 4/8/54, SOAS, Pratt Papers, PPMS 5/25.

<sup>185</sup> Woodhead, *Yangtze and its Problems*, p.147.

<sup>186</sup> See the analysis of merchant cooperation in Sichuan with the Chongqing warlord, Liu Xiang, in Kapp, “Chunking as a Center of Warlord Power, 1926-1937”, pp.150-52, 158-59.

their British loyalties and character. Business dictated the necessity of sinification but distrust of the Chinese, and imperial dignity, suggested otherwise and there was a latent fear of giving encouragement to nationalist movements elsewhere.

Ultimately, legislative harassment from the National Government throughout the 1930s, and the growing realisation that Japan's strong-arm policy in China was not to Britain's benefit after all, forced companies to adopt more cooperative ("un-British" Woodhead would have said) measures to anchor themselves into the China market. Even Jardines contemplated bringing Song Ziwen and his wealth in to the company in 1935.<sup>187</sup> Many of these were larger scale versions of a suggestion, floated by Swires manager in Chongqing, for the pattern of share distribution for the proposed Taikoo Chinese Navigation Company in 1929:

It is the office not the man that is important and the only way of gaining the support of the military officials is... to attach the dividends from a certain number of shares to certain positions. The holders of these offices would then be directly interested in helping us earn a dividend - fairly frank bribery, but we cannot see how else our object could be achieved along these lines.

"I must say, I do like this fellow's tone and outlook", noted G.W. Swire.<sup>188</sup> It was a long way from that of Jardine's Ross and his bayonets, but it promised a relationship very similar to that which existed between Chongqing's warlord, Liu Xiang, and Swires' local Chinese competitor, the Minsheng Shiye Company.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise*, pp.88-92; Swires in 1937 offered Song a 30% share in CNCo, Jurgen Osterhammel "Imperialism in Transition", p.284.

<sup>188</sup> BS Shanghai to JS London, 28/10/29 and enclosure E.G. Price (Chunking) to BS Shanghai, 29/8/29, JSS III 2/8.

<sup>189</sup> Kapp, "Chunking as a Center of Warlord Power, 1926-1937", pp.150-52.

## Chapter 6

### "To serve and not to rule"<sup>1</sup>

#### British Protestant Missionaries and Chinese Nationalism, 1928-1931

The Church's enemies dub us "running dogs of Imperialism", and while in the ordinary sense of the term there is no truth in the charge, yet in the spirit and methods of our work I find something which approximates closely enough to spiritual imperialism.<sup>2</sup>

### I Introduction

#### General Attitudes

This chapter examines the attitudes of a representative selection of British Protestant mission societies towards the Chinese and developments in the aftermath of the Nationalist Revolution.<sup>3</sup> It will be shown that the mission world faced many of the same internal and external economic and political pressures that affected other Britons in China, and sought solutions along similar lines. With the aim of preserving their presence in China they attempted to change their attitudes towards the Chinese by reforming their institutional and social relations and structures.

Mission attitudes towards the Chinese, as shown in chapter two, were capable of great negativity on the basis of abstract mission ideology alone. Mission practices and structures reinforced this negativity to the extent that by 1927 they were clearly in need of reform. Furthermore, while the mission discourse about change was pre-eminently concerned with organisational, financial and doctrinal problems, it was pervaded by the vocabulary of Chinese characteristics derived from that constructed by A.H. Smith and others. This construct was used for analysis, explication and justification and its use was enmeshed with the unreformed structure of mission life.

Although apparently worlds apart, in their propaganda British missions and businesses shared at least one basic methodological belief - namely that the Chinese needed a period of Western tutelage without which they could not develop and during which they would be trained.<sup>4</sup> The assumptions that China needed to develop Western-style businesses or Western Christian morality were not questioned. They were rooted as

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<sup>1</sup> "The Society recognises that the new generation of missionaries must be well-equipped intellectually for the work and be content to take a second place and to serve and not to rule the Churches in China", C.G. Sparham to F.H. Hawkins, 21/9/28, enclosure *NCDN*, 20/9/28, "Present Opportunities for Missionaries in China", LMS Central China Box 43.

<sup>2</sup> E.R. Hughes to F.H. Hawkins, 8/2/29, LMS China Fukien, Box 15.

<sup>3</sup> British Catholic missionary activity in China was negligible. Unless otherwise specified all missionaries discussed in this chapter were Protestant.

<sup>4</sup> C.H.B. Longman to F.H. Hawkins, 23/11/31, LMS North China Box 29.

much in commonly held views about the characteristics of the Chinese as in sectional self-interest and institutional inertia. Furthermore, a period of tutelage, by definition, presupposed transition and change, but the concept was often used to defend conservatism and opposition to change. As they shared such beliefs it should not be surprising that British missions and businesses faced broadly similar problems and adopted broadly similar solutions. Although many of the issues dealt with by missions in the late 1920s were ongoing, or rooted in the structure of the mission process, they acquired a new urgency and importance in that period.

### **Organisation**

There were, very broadly, three types of mission; firstly, there were those which were directly connected to a church in Britain, such as the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society [WMMS] of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the English Presbyterian Mission [EPM] of the Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England. Secondly, there were independents strongly identified with a particular church, such as the London Missionary Society [LMS] and the Congregationalist Churches. Thirdly there were the interdenominational missions, such as the China Inland Mission [CIM].

Most of these had a British-based committee, the mission board, which dealt directly with area committees in China and often with a national committee there. It was responsible for funding and recruitment. The China committees met regularly, but their day to day running was in the hands of their secretaries. A great deal of influence could be wielded by a very few individuals within particular societies, such as F.H. Hawkins, London China secretary of the London Missionary Society [LMS], or a provincial secretary of the WMMS such as H.B. Rattenbury of the Hubei District. In China each mission society had its own mission stations, often with educational or medical institutions attached, and control over churches and church organisations and structures of its own making.

Metropolitan denominational and organisational differences and jealousies often made protestant mission unity difficult, the basic division being between "modernists" (or "liberals") and "fundamentalists". Protestant moves towards organisational unity in China, such as the setting up of the National Christian Council of China [NCC] in 1922, had prompted conservative groups to set up fundamentalist organisations such as the Bible Union, or to seek to establish conservative control over union organisations (that is, those run jointly by a group of societies) and institutions such as theological colleges and publishing bodies.<sup>5</sup> These divisions were all too readily apparent from the pages of the

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<sup>5</sup> The aim of the NCC was to coordinate protestant activities in China and it grew out of the cumulative efforts of preceding conferences and a missionary-dominated China

influential *Chinese Recorder*, which was fairly broad in content but ultimately reflected the more liberal ideas of its British-born editor Frank Rawlinson.<sup>6</sup>

### **Relations with each other**

Missionaries by no means formed a homogeneous community. There were theological and national divisions which often far outweighed the community of purpose they shared, that is, the conversion of China to Protestant Christianity. Fundamentalist and liberal Americans were both generally more extreme than their British counterparts.<sup>7</sup> These divisions were often apparent within individual societies, but especially within union organisations where a continual struggle between liberal and fundamentalist elements was played out.<sup>8</sup> These divisions were also exacerbated by political responses to the Nationalist Revolution in China, but reflected changes in patterns of belief in Britain and in other mission-supplying countries.<sup>9</sup>

The time-lag between home society and society in China was greater in mission work than in business. This was accentuated by the old age of many missionaries and especially of their leaders. D.E. Hoste, General Director of the CIM had first gone to China in 1885 and had held his post since 1902. C.G. Sparham, Secretary of the China Advisory Council of the LMS, had also first gone out in 1885. Hoste's replacement in 1931 had arrived in China in 1894.<sup>10</sup> Generational differences could poison relations at grass roots levels between older, conservative, Victorian missionaries, and the post-Great

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Continuation Committee. There was no direct representation of Chinese Churches until 1929; K. Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions In China* (London, 1929), pp.795-98; CCYB 1929, p.225. Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter: China and Christianity* (London, 1988), p.155-58.

<sup>6</sup> On Rawlinson see Rawlinson, *Rawlinson, the Recorder and China's Revolution*, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> H.F. Wallace to Maclagan, 30/6/27, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 44; P. Green to Miss Hunter, 12/12/27, WMMSA Women's Work Collection [hereafter WW], Hupeh fiche 129.

<sup>8</sup> For opposition to the LMS at the Amoy Union Theological College see L.G. Philips to F.H. Hawkins, 5/1/31, LMS China Fukien Box 16; the CIM and the Southern Baptists were reported as having "captured" the China Sunday School Union at Shanghai by the liberal Ronald Rees, WMMSA South China fiche 593, Rees to K. Maclennan, 26/10/30. See also Paul Varg, *Missionaries, Chinese, and Diplomats: The American Protestant Missionary Movement in China, 1890-1952* (Princeton, 1958), pp.213-14.

<sup>9</sup> Fundamentalists "put down the whole of this revolution to the modern education which has come to China largely aided by mission schools," H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 24/2/28, WMMSA Hupeh, fiche 388.

<sup>10</sup> NCDN, 10/1/25, pp.13-14; CWM "Annotated Register of LMS Missionaries 1756-1923", No.826; *China's Millions*, September 1931, p.174.

War generation.<sup>11</sup> Attitudes formed in the "golden-age" of the missionary "occupation" of China could not be expected to be flexible and reform-minded.

### **Missionary Lifestyles**

#### **Socialisation**

Missionaries had some of the closest continual links with all types of Chinese communities of all foreign groups in China, but the structure of the missionary's life was as influenced by the lessons of socialisation - as a Briton in China as well as as a member of the mission community - as it was by the dictates of Christian evangelising. As in the business world the structures of mission organisation and its social life institutionalised distrust of the Chinese and the acceptance of Chinese difference and, thereby, segregation. The foreign-staffed missions generally ran Chinese church organisations. Chinese Christians were usually always in subordinate positions to Europeans.

Most British staff lived in large foreign-style houses in mission or educational compounds. They had servants and employed a variety of Chinese auxiliary staff in their schools, hospitals and Church and residential compounds, just as businessmen did. For the evangelical worker (that is, the active proselytisers and preachers) much of the hard work of evangelising was undertaken in the Chinese countryside, often in rough conditions, (the equivalent of the salesman's "up-country" tour); but there was always a compound to retreat to in which could be found a British house, British food, furnishings, company and the exaggerated trappings of a middle-class British life style.<sup>12</sup> The British generally socialised with each other. This was especially true of their holidays in Guling, Mogan Shan, Beidaihe, and so on, retreats of Britishness which, together with regular district meetings and conferences punctuated missionary life.<sup>13</sup> Then there were the generally seven-yearly year-long furloughs, which would "help to restore the sense of mental equilibrium dislocated" by conditions in China and by contact with the Chinese national character.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Clements to Mrs May, 11/4/32, 4/3/32, LMS China Personal Box 13; her aged colleagues reactions to her taste for golf was one of the symbolic reasons for the resignation of Miss J.M. Dixon from the LMS before completing two years service in Hong Kong, Dixon to F.H. Hawkins, 5/8/31, LMS, South China Box 27.

<sup>12</sup> When these virtues of their retreat were encroached on by the erection of Chinese dwellings around the EPM's Women's Missionary Association compound in Xiamen the inhabitants demanded the planting of trees to shield them and raised the question of abandoning the site for a more private one, "Amoy Mission Council Minutes" in H.J.P. Anderson to MacLagan, 3/10/30, EPMA South Fukien Box 12.

<sup>13</sup> *CMYB 1911*, appendix Vii, "Missionary Holidays", pp.xxiii-xxviii. Conferences were social events as much as business ones, see, for example, R. Rees, "All-China Conference on Religious Education: A General Account of the Conference", *Educational Review [ER]*, October 1931, pp.377-78.

<sup>14</sup> A.P. Cullen, "Annual Report 1931", LMS North China Reports Box 11.

It was widely accepted by the 1920s that missionaries had segregated themselves socially from their Chinese equivalents and that this was a structural result of mission socialisation. Students at the North China Union Language School in Beijing, for example, only met Chinese servants and teachers and generally socialised with other foreigners.<sup>15</sup> Distance was maintained in other ways. The adoption of Chinese children by missionary women was usually deprecated by mission boards. The WMMS refused to permit such children to live in mission bungalows. Such adoptions could not be prevented but the society refused to pay travel expenses and also refused to accept them as *bona fide* adoptions.<sup>16</sup> Intermarriage with Chinese was not condoned and was very rare. Refusal, or inability, to learn Chinese, notably by medical or educational workers, was also distancing, while formal language training for missionaries was still in its early days.<sup>17</sup>

The rawness revealed by accusations of social segregation, such as against Dr. Liddell of the LMS in a letter to the *Christian World* by a young LMS missionary, Henry Marsden, in 1928, is revealing.<sup>18</sup> Marsden was severely censured by his colleagues and superiors, but his claim was generally justifiable.<sup>19</sup> Marsden also joined in an ongoing debate in the *Chinese Recorder* about missionaries and their "standard of living". While liberal writers saw the mission life-style as exclusive, pragmatists saw it as sensible, and psychologically and physically necessary.<sup>20</sup> Some claimed that the Western life-style of missionaries was not in itself a problem unless it was inflexible, segregated or zealously preserved.<sup>21</sup> However, it was recognised that the existence of this situation automatically

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<sup>15</sup> David F. Anderson, 1930, "Report of the First Year's Work in China 9th December 1929 to 31st December 1930", LMS Central China Reports Box 11; "First Impressions of a Missionary", *CR*, October 1931, pp.616-17.

<sup>16</sup> WMMSA to the South China Missionaries' Meeting, 28/11/29, WMMSA Synod fiche 198; [?] to Miss Long, 20/1/32, WMMSA WW Hupeh, fiche 126; Nora Booth to Miss Heller, 23/3/24, WMMSA WW Hupeh, fiche 117; F.J. Griffith to Miss Heathcote, 24/4/29, Scott Papers.

<sup>17</sup> Latourette, *History of Christian Missions*, pp.640-41.

<sup>18</sup> C.G. Sparham to F.H. Hawkins, 28/12/28, LMS Central China Box 45; E.A. Preston to F.H. Hawkins, 3/12/28, and enclosures, LMS China Fukien Box 15; Preston to Hawkins, 5/1/29 and especially the enclosed letter from E.R. Hughes to Preston, 19/12/28, where Hughes states that his "own view is that in the past I have slipped into a way of living which was prevalent when I came to China and that way of living could and should be revised," LMS China Fukien Box 15. See also Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, pp.197-98.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, William Sewell on attempts to exclude Chinese from temples used as holiday retreats in Sichuan, journal letter, 10/7/28, SOAS PP MS 16/3.

<sup>20</sup> Marsden, "Missionary Hindrances", *CR*, December 1928, pp.976-77; R.B. Whitaker, "A Missionary Confession", *CR*, January 1929, pp.7-14; K.A. Baird, "Missionary Mistakes", *CR*, July 1929, pp.460-61; M.S. Stewart, "Call to the Simple Life", *CR*, March 1930, pp.153-60.

<sup>21</sup> E.M. Rainey, "The Missionary as Neighbour", *CR*, September 1928, pp.554-58, *CR*, February 1929, p.125.



raised problems in relationships with the Chinese, habits of superiority or of indifference, of which missionaries were not always aware.<sup>22</sup>

In the larger treaty ports, such as Shanghai, Tianjin and Hankou some missionaries were members of masonic lodges and generally took part in the social and institutional activities of the British communities. Many missionaries openly identified themselves with the business communities and the political status quo. C.H.B. Longman was one such, he promised the London Secretary of the LMS "words which would harrow up your feelings on the treatment of Chinese and those foreigners who have lost their extraterritoriality." Others attacked nationalist demands using the language of business opposition.<sup>23</sup>

There were exceptions: Ronald Rees of the WMMS worked to foster better relations in Shanghai during the crisis of early 1927, by organising informal Sino-British discussion groups with British officers, businessmen and other non-missionaries.<sup>24</sup> However, treaty port life was seductive. Older missionaries worried that newer arrivals, especially those who went to the North China Union Language School, met too many American missionaries and secular language students, and were increasingly unprepared for the rigours of life in the interior.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, modernist Christians, especially those working for such Shanghai-based organisations as the NCC and the YMCA, were too secularly involved for the liking of the Victorian and Edwardian generations.<sup>26</sup> In general they had a valid point. The particular requirements of missionary socialisation could be blurred by the pleasantries of treaty port life. The Baptist Missionary Society [BMS] worried about the rate their young female missionaries were "collapsing", and losing sight of their vocation and vocational celibacy.<sup>27</sup> In the LMS Marjorie Clement's experiences, in her year of language training at Beijing, were quite obviously a liberation from a dull and predictable existence in Britain. There were holidays, the "whole of

<sup>22</sup> E.M. Dixon, "On the Problem of Servants", *CR*, August 1931, pp.502-506.

<sup>23</sup> C.H.B. Longman to F.H. Hawkins, 20/9/31 and 23/11/31, LMS North China Box 29; Rev. Hope Moncrief to Maclagan, 1/6/27, EPMA South Fukien Box 19.

<sup>24</sup> R. Rees, circular Letter, 30/3/27, WMMSA South China fiche 582; "Life in China", Sewell Papers, SOAS PP MS 16/38, p.8.

<sup>25</sup> Marion Broomhall to Miss Bowser, 18/10/30, BMSA CH/55; this was a continuing argument, "Memorandum of Meeting Concerning the Peking Language School, 16/11/20", CBMS, ET/China 49, China Political, file 4. Evacuation to Shanghai may have produced a stream of self-conscious comments on the shallowness of treaty port life from Miss Green of the WMMS, but it is evident from her letters that she enjoyed the change and the excitement, she also found herself a husband, Green to Miss Hunter, 30/3/27, 17/4/27, WMMSA WW Hupeh, fiche 130.

<sup>26</sup> On the likely effects of the "Shanghai atmosphere" on Ronald Rees when he moved to work for the NCC see Edgar Dewstoe to C.W. Andrews, 20/3/28, WMMSA South China fiche 576.

<sup>27</sup> Katherine M. Franklin to M.E. Bowser, 9/5/29, BMSA CH/70. For a near collapse see Clements to Mrs May, 11/2/32, LMS China Personal Box 13.

August free. Absolutely. It's a thing I have never had in my life before." There was a servant, (at one point she had no idea if the servants went home or slept somewhere in her house) and responsibility both to the local communities and to the wider Christian enterprise in China. For an ex-shop assistant and domestic help this was revelatory. Its consequences for her relations with the Chinese were tangible, as her letters, for example, repeat treaty port clichés about the modern Chinese.<sup>28</sup>

## **Attitudes towards the Chinese**

### **Distrust**

Segregation and distance bred distrust of the Chinese. This was most obviously expressed in British approaches to financial matters. European staff generally retained control of the disbursement of funds.<sup>29</sup> Whilst it was argued that this was only proper, as mission funds were donations held and used on trust, it was a topic which could sour relations with Chinese Churches. Slowly-increasing Chinese participation and responsibility within decision making bodies, was of limited significance while missions retained complete financial authority.<sup>30</sup> There were defalcations and insider-robberies, but pragmatic suspicion was of lesser importance than unsubstantiable generalisations, rooted in notions of Chinese characteristic dishonesty, in maintaining the institutional exclusion of Chinese from financial control: "We all know" wrote a member of the EPM:

how ready they are to use money given for one purpose for some other, and to manipulate public funds for private purposes.<sup>31</sup>

Often, there was distrust of the motive of converts. It was still feared, sometimes with good reason, that conversion was sometimes an attempt, on the part of Chinese, to harness the residual prestige of foreign institutions, or of individual foreigners, for use in legal or other disputes.<sup>32</sup> Distrust may also have been heightened by the fact that a good proportion of converts, if not exactly "rice-Christians", were "limpet-Christians":

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<sup>28</sup> Clements to May, 2/8/31, 4/3/32; see her description of a modern Chinese student, Clements to May, 23/9/32 and Chinese warlords, 23/9/32, LMS China Personal Box 13; LMS Candidates Papers 1900-1950, Box 8, M.G. Clements. See also Arthur Whitmore to C.W. Andrews, 29/11/28, WMMSA South China fiche 586.

<sup>29</sup> James Moulton Roe, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905-1954* (London, 1965), p.343.

<sup>30</sup> E.M. Bolton to Miss Hunter, 1/1/27, WMMSA WW Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 122.

<sup>31</sup> A clerk at the LMS office in Shanghai, for example, was caught forging cheques in 1930, Edith Lane to F.H. Hawkins, 17/1/31, LMS Central China Box 47; H.F. Wallace to MacLagan, 30/6/27, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 44.

<sup>32</sup> "A delegation came... asking us to send them a preacher, as a group of the local gentry were anxious to form a Christian Church. Such a request in China at once aroused suspicions as to [their] motives", A.H.J. Murray, "Annual Report 1931", LMS North China Reports Box 11. This was a genuine enquiry but two years earlier his wife found

Their views of Christianity were distinctly bound up with a foreign organisation, with unlimited funds, which existed to find jobs for able-bodied members as Mission employés and domestic servants to foreigners in the large cities, and to educating, free of charge, all the children of converts, making suitable provision in each case for life.<sup>33</sup>

Servants and ancillary medical and educational staff were prime converts, and often seem to have converted for pragmatic reasons, for scholarships for example.<sup>34</sup> Such a relationship structurally encouraged insecurity and distrust, (and, of course, as in all foreign households, the Chinese servant was always subject to distrust - over "squeeze" on household accounts, petty theft, or as a bad influence on missionary children<sup>35</sup>). Furthermore there was always a fear of converts "slipping back" into "idolatry and superstition".<sup>36</sup> This process could be widely defined, especially in view of the often comprehensive dismissal of Chinese customs and culture as heathen superstition; this approach raised difficulties when it came to such ceremonies as burial or marriage.<sup>37</sup> The logical conclusion was that, without European supervision and authority, heathenism would quickly reassert itself.

### **The Inferiority Complex**

Distrust, then, permeated the largely two-tier structure of foreign control and Chinese dependence. This was true of relations with the Chinese church but featured especially in mission institutions where foreign workers supervised trained or untrained Chinese auxiliaries such as "bible women", colporteurs, nurses and teachers. This was an

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herself being used in the disputes of a Mrs Yu with her adopted son and her fellow villagers near Cangzhou, Hebei: "I helped her one day to gather some [fuel], and on our return to the village she shouted to some men standing idle:- "See how the foreigner does for me what you ought to do! Are you not ashamed of yourselves." Edith Murray, "Annual Report 1929", 30/1/30, LMS North China Reports Box 10.

<sup>33</sup> Mr and Mrs Arnold G. Bryson, 30/1/30, "Reports 1929", LMS North China Reports Box 10; see, for example, F.J. Griffith to Miss Heathcote, 15/5/32, Scott papers; Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.280.

<sup>34</sup> P.M. Scott's first three converts in Datong, Shanxi, included one servant and one student, who promptly transferred to Shantung Christian University for graduation, P.M. Scott to "Catalpa", 11/1/27, Scott papers. (The servant subsequently went mad.) The novelist Lao She's brief flirtation with Christianity appears to have been not unconnected with a language scholarship at Yenching University, see my forthcoming article on the subject.

<sup>35</sup> Sewell, journal letter, 9/7/29, Sewell papers, SOAS PP MS 16/3; Dorothy Barbour to Parents, 12/12/30, LMS China Personal Box 14; it was feared, for example, that servants taught children to masturbate, E.M. Dixon, "On the Problem of Servants", *CR*, August 1931, p.502.

<sup>36</sup> Bishop Hall of the CMS in 1932, quoted in Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.251.

<sup>37</sup> A.H.J. Murray, "Annual Report 1931", LMS North China Reports Box 11; Clements to Mrs May, 1/10/32.

increasingly anachronistic but deeply rooted relationship, and was influential in forming the paternalistic attitudes of many of those missionaries whose views were considered unsuitable by 1927. Its effect on the Chinese side was felt to be that the size of the foreign presence encouraged "spoon feeding" and an "inferiority complex"; it was not a healthy situation for either group.<sup>38</sup> This structure, which denied the Chinese positions of effective responsibility, also contributed to the British assumption that the Chinese were actually incapable of running churches and mission institutions. The other factor in this "complex" was the clash between self-ascribed British characteristics and those assigned to the Chinese:

English human nature being what it is, and Chinese human nature being what it is, before we had had time to think we shall have found Mr Hsin back in the old position of natural subordination, and Mr Rowley dominating in the usual English fashion.<sup>39</sup>

The "usual English fashion" involved, ultimately, a lack of patience with normal patterns of Chinese social behaviour and proprieties and, as will be shown below, impatience fuelled insensitivity and disdain.

## **II The need for reform**

These attitudes may have been necessary proselytising themes and morale-boosting props, in the face of slow progress but they were anachronistic by the 1920s; they belonged to the age of aggressive missionary expansion. Disenchantment with Western "civilisation" and "progress" was as common a post-Great War theme in China as it was in Europe.<sup>40</sup> The changing intellectual climate in the West was experienced at first hand by many Chinese returned students, and also as a result of the visits of Western intellectuals, such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, to China in the 1920s.<sup>41</sup> Younger Chinese intellectuals and students were interested in Western science by whose standards the fundamentalist Protestantism which so characterised mission Christianity was charged

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<sup>38</sup> W.W. Gibson to C.W. Andrews, 11/11/27, WMMSA Hunan Correspondence, fiche 212.

<sup>39</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 28/3/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 389.

<sup>40</sup> Liang Qichao's widely-broadcast disillusionment with the West after his post-Great War trip to Europe was the most famous, and possibly most influential instance, Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1960), pp.327-33.

<sup>41</sup> Yeh Wen-hsin, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1919-1937* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1990), p.115; Barry Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China; Educational Reform and Political power in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1977); Suzanne P. Ogden, "The Sage and the Ink-Pot: Bertrand Russell and China's Social Reconstruction in the 1920's", *Modern Asian Studies*, 16, No.4 (October 1982), pp.529-600.

with "obscurantism and social defeatism."<sup>42</sup> By 1929, E.R. Hughes, who had worked as an evangelical missionary for the LMS in Fujian since 1911, had come to the conclusion that the mission enterprise had made no efforts to engage intellectually or sympathetically with Chinese culture and as a result its successes were shallow.<sup>43</sup> Hughes resigned to work for the Chinese YMCA in Shanghai on literary and research work. The need to appeal to the "better educated" classes was well attested, and the success and influence of Dewey and Russell paradoxically gave some the hope that well-aimed and informed Christian work could also have similarly far-reaching results.<sup>44</sup> Certainly, such organisations as the YMCA were popular, and Christianity had a higher public profile in Nationalist China than it had ever had before, most symbolically with the conversion of Jiang Jieshi and the influence of the Song sisters and Kong Xiangxi. David Yui of the YMCA had officiated at Jiang's wedding, Wang Zhengting was briefly General Secretary of the YMCA, Kong Xiangxi had been a secretary and so had an estimated 148 Government officials.<sup>45</sup>

Anti-Christian thought was given a political articulation and structure throughout the politically contentious 1920s. An anti-Christian movement was launched by the Anti-Christian Student Federation [*Feijidujiao xuesheng tongmeng*] and the Great Anti-Religious Federation [*Feizongjiao da tongmeng*] in response to the 1922 National Christian Conference and its tactlessly-titled report *The Christian Occupation of China* (1922) (the military metaphor is worth noting, such terminology was prevalent in mission description and propaganda). In 1924, the Educational Rights Recovery movement organised student strikes and attacks on mission schools and colleges, initially in response to the heavy-handed actions of a British headmaster in Guangzhou who refused his students permission to form a student union. The May 30th movement and the Nationalist Revolution exacerbated this movement. Students rebelled, and often so did Chinese staff. This poisoned relations but also revealed, in effect, severe structural problems in mission education, in relations between staff and students and between foreign heads and teachers and Chinese staff.<sup>46</sup> These experiences left a legacy of increased distrust of Chinese Christians among many missionaries and prompted others to

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<sup>42</sup> E.R. Hughes, "A background to the Problem of Christian Literature in China", *International Review of Missions*, October 1930, p.519; Chow, *May Fourth Movement*, pp.320-27.

<sup>43</sup> E.R. Hughes to F.H. Hawkins, 8/2/29, LMS China Fukien Box 15.

<sup>44</sup> W.F. Dawson to F.H. Hawkins, 22/1/31, North China Box 28.

<sup>45</sup> Shirley Garrett, "The Chambers of Commerce and the YMCA", Elvin and Skinner, eds., *Chinese City Between Two Worlds*, p.237.

<sup>46</sup> *CCYB 1925*, pp.51-60, 269; *CCYB 1926*, pp.225-26. On the anti-Christian movements see Yip, *Religion, Nationalism and Chinese Students*, *passim.*, and Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, *passim.*

realise that relations with their converts, colleagues and organised Chinese Christianity had to be renegotiated.<sup>47</sup>

The speed of development of the NCC, and the pace at which reforms became necessary, caught many societies by surprise. The evacuations of 1926-27 "rudely thrust" autonomy and responsibility onto many Chinese Churches. Many missionaries retrospectively welcomed this shock-treatment, it was "the opportunity the Church of China was needing". Developments in national politics also often exposed "festerings" problems, at local levels, between Church and Mission and offered real solutions, for the first time, through organisational sinification.<sup>48</sup>

Many individual missionaries were driven by the events of the Nationalist Revolution to question their own assumptions, and much of this debate, for example in the pages of the *Chinese Recorder*, was articulated as a question of race, and institutional and individual race relations.<sup>49</sup> Ideas about the world-wide decline of "white" supremacy were as prevalent in mission debate as in other fields. This was not a debate unique to China, and it must be viewed in the context of missionary reactions to political developments in India (the Amritsar massacre and the May 30th shootings were often compared) and in the still wider context of the 1928 International Missionary Council meeting in Jerusalem. This body, which represented protestant groups world-wide, laid stress that year on the necessity of the process of "indigenisation" of Church and mission structures.<sup>50</sup>

The events of the years 1925 to 1927 culminated in the withdrawal of most foreign missionaries from the interior of China. This was unavoidable, but such evacuations were felt by some missionaries to undermine their relations with local Chinese Christians, as they solidly identified the missionaries with the general foreign community and called into question their commitment to the Chinese colleagues and converts that they left behind as they fled to safety. The lesson of 1927 was well remembered in the unsettled countryside afterwards, especially in areas subject to Communist attack: "We have not much to say about "dare to be Daniel" if we remove all

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<sup>47</sup> For a sample of distrust and bitterness see E.R. Rainey, "Report of Ting Chow Girl's School for 1926", 16/2/27, LMS China Fukien Reports.

<sup>48</sup> W.W. Gibson to C.W. Andrews, 11/11/27, WMMSA Hunan fiche 212; F.J. Griffith to Miss Heathcote, 13/5/27, Scott papers; E.R. Hughes to F.H. Hawkins, 19/7/28 and "Minutes of the Fukien District Committee, December 1928", in E.A. Preston to F.H. Hawkins, 5/1/29, LMS China Fukien, Box 15.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, T.W.D. James, "The Missionary Vocation today: An Apologia and an Appeal", undated c.1929, EPMA Lingtung, Swatow Box 43.

<sup>50</sup> E.C. Lobenstine, "Church and Mission", *CCYB* 1929, pp.252-53.

possible prospective Daniels away from the Lion's Mouth", wrote H.B. Rattenbury.<sup>51</sup> In fact, it was often true that Chinese Christians were eager for the Westerners to leave when trouble began, otherwise it was more difficult for the Chinese church to take a lower profile and retain public integrity by distancing itself from the Western institution.

Evacuation also undermined the physical position of missions as their buildings, schools and hospitals were occupied by Nationalist or other troops, or seized, often by the Chinese staff of missions, and used as secular, or independently religious, institutions. Reclaiming such buildings or keeping hold of them was a constant problem after 1927 when the return to China began.

### **Sustaining their commitment to China.**

Mission societies indulged in a fit of introspection in and after 1927. London deputations or secretaries from the LMS, BMS and the Friends Service Council [FSC] made investigative trips to China. The pages of the *Chinese Recorder* and the *Educational Review* (the journal of the China Christian Education Association) were also forums for this introspection.<sup>52</sup> Union organisations and ad-hoc groups, such as representatives of the Christian Colleges and Universities in China, also met and discussed future plans.<sup>53</sup> The deputations came up with similar, unsurprising, conclusions. They assessed the damage, physical and metaphorical, caused by the revolutionary period. They also identified social and other changes which could not be ignored and which had to be accommodated.<sup>54</sup> In 1927 the CIM held a series of meetings both in London, and among their displaced workers in China, which assessed the situation there and discussed future tactics. It was widely realised that on their return a different relationship with Chinese Christians and Chinese Churches would be required.<sup>55</sup> The BMS announced the need for "fraternal" relations to replace "paternal" ones.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> CCYB 1928, pp.155-59. H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 28/12/27, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 387; H.B. Rattenbury to A.W. Hooker, 12/2/30, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 400.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, *ER*, January 1928, pp.36-53.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

<sup>54</sup> See *London Missionary Society. China Mission. Report by Mr. F.H. Hawkins on his visit to China as special deputation from the Directors, August 1927 to March 1928* (London, 1928) and W. Parker Gray and C.E. Wilson [BMS] *Report of a Visit to China 1929*, both in SOAS CBMS E/T/China 15, Mission Reports, and the file on the Quakers' "China Deputation 1929-30", FSC CH/10. American mission boards also joined in, A.L. Warnshuis, "Changes in Missionary Policies and Methods in China: North American Boards", *IRM*, April 1928, pp.306-307.

<sup>55</sup> *China's Millions*, August 1927, p.128; *ibid.*, December 1927, pp.180, 189; *ibid.*, June 1928, p.94; Ebenezer Mann, "News Letters from China 1926-1938", September 1927, pp.520-21, Mann papers, SOAS MSS 380302/2.

<sup>56</sup> *BMS Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the 137th year ending March 31st 1929*, p.14, BMSA.

Missionaries, like the business community, had no intention of pulling out of China. A certain amount of pride and an attempt to recoup some of the prestige lost through evacuation was involved.<sup>57</sup> The BMS asserted that events had ultimately shown that withdrawal would be "premature" and that work needed intensifying.<sup>58</sup> In 1929, the CIM decided to call for two hundred new missionaries to go to China, and this had been achieved by 1931.<sup>59</sup> Theoretical writers stressed that there was still a place for missionaries in China, and, in principle, most Chinese Churches and Union organisations wanted them to stay.<sup>60</sup> It was clear, however, that the old ways of life and structures were no longer tenable. The years since 1925 had seen crude propagandist attacks on missions [see figure 7, following page], sustained intellectual criticisms of their position, and frequent physical attacks on missionaries. This criticism came from both Chinese nationalists, from Chinese Christians and secular organisations such as the NCC and YMCA, and from the foreign business community, which tended wildly to blame mission education for the phenomenon of nationalism and often identified the NCC as a communist organisation. This foreign hostility was especially directed against American missionaries, but the British were tainted by association. The Tientsin British Chamber of Commerce accused British missionaries of being used by "certain Chinese circles... for propaganda", and attacked the "proclivity to dabble in questions of a political nature" of certain missionaries.<sup>61</sup>

Some of this criticism was reflected in missionary self-criticisms and analysis, with more self-styled progressive thinkers, such as E.R. Hughes or Ronald Rees of the WMMS and the NCC, allying themselves with the nationalist position to varying extents. There were also many within the community who refused to accept these criticisms or who opposed the nationalist movement. Many were extremely embittered by the events of 1925-1927, less affected workers professed themselves shocked by some of the reactions they witnessed.<sup>62</sup> Some, like many British businessmen, sent home anti-Nationalist propaganda. Others identified by their colleagues as possessors of the

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<sup>57</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 19/3/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 389.

<sup>58</sup> *BMS Annual Report 1928*, p.15, BMSA.

<sup>59</sup> *China's Millions*, 15/3/29; CIM, London Council Minutes, 9/12/31.

<sup>60</sup> L.C. Smythe, "The Place of the Missionary in China", *CR*, October 1931, pp.618-23.

<sup>61</sup> Tientsin British Chamber of Commerce Circular Letter to Secretary of the FMC of the PCE, 8/12/25, EPMA Box 61a "China Troubles 1925-6".

<sup>62</sup> *CCYB 1928*, pp.114-16; E.R. Rainey, "Report of Ting Chow Girls School for 1926", 16/12/27, LMS Reports China Fukien Box 5; Clifford M. Stubbs to H.T. Silcock, 28/10/27, 10/11/27, FSC CH/5/4; W.G. Sewell, circular Letter, 2/7/27, FSC CH/5/4.



"Shanghai mind" or as supporters of the views of the *North China Daily News* (for which paper many missionaries were also correspondents).<sup>63</sup>

After the May 30th incident most British societies issued a joint declaration proclaiming their wish to work without the treaty framework. Most missionaries in the field

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<sup>63</sup> Edgar Dewstoe to C.W. Andrews, 21/12/27, WMMSA South China fiche 575; Rev. C.S. Minty to C.W. Andrews, 31/12/27, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 394; Hawkins, *Report*, p.20, CBMS E/T/China 15; Rev. John Shields, letters and articles, etc., BMSA Miscellaneous papers. A fierce enemy of the NCC was the extreme anti-communist American missionary Edgar D. Strother, a favourite with the Treaty Port press, see, for example, his *A Bolshevised China - The World's Greatest Peril* (Shanghai, 1927).



also issued similar proclamations.<sup>64</sup> It was realised, with relief by some, that sustained attacks on missions had forced the pace of reform and had cut the Chinese church off from "the remnants of the political prestige and the privileges which she has enjoyed as a quasi-foreign institution."<sup>65</sup>

Support for the mission enterprise was waning in some British circles. Both the spread of liberal theological ideas and secular intellectual changes caused this change. It was most apparent among more progressive Christian groupings (such as the Quakers, many of whom were loath to even use the word "mission").<sup>66</sup> Interest in China quickly fell off in late 1927.<sup>67</sup> Lack of support was also apparent from the funding difficulties many societies faced. This problem was long-term and only partly exacerbated by the world depression after 1929.<sup>68</sup> Cutbacks necessitated by this decline also encouraged speedier sinification as missions, like British businesses realised that Chinese employees were cheaper.<sup>69</sup> The drop in missionary numbers after 1927 did apparently ease the situation but this was not a desirable solution. The chaos in China also made funds more difficult to raise there, both from wealthy Chinese and from foreign and Chinese companies.<sup>70</sup>

For a variety of reasons then, missionary societies were faced with the fact that the tone and structure of their presence in China was no longer tenable as it stood. If missions were to stay in China they would have to reform themselves, and the attitudes of their mission personnel, especially their foreign personnel, and their relations with the Chinese churches.

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<sup>64</sup> CCYB 1926, pp.483-95, 510-15.

<sup>65</sup> T. Cocker Brown, "Decennial Report 1930", LMS Central China Reports, Box 11.

<sup>66</sup> W.H Davidson to H.T. Silcock, 13/12/27, FSC/CH/5/3. See also Rose Tebbut to Bertha Bracey, 18/10/30, FSC CH/6. Stacy Woddy, "The Younger and Older Churches: A Question concerning Help", *IRM*, October 1928, pp.610-18. In the United States, post-war social and intellectual changes had a great effect on mission support. Indeed in 1930 a Layman's Foreign Missions Inquiry was set up by seven Societies to investigate the shift, Varg, *Missionaries, Chinese, and Diplomats*, pp.147-66, 167-79. The report was published as *Re-Thinking Missions* (New York, 1932).

<sup>67</sup> H.H. Catford to Clifford M. Stubbs, 19/12/27, FSC CH/11, vol. III.

<sup>68</sup> CMS income, for example, reached a high-point of £651,610 in 1920 but by 1934 had sunk to £391,676, Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910-1942, Volume 1* (London, 1971), pp.481, 485.

<sup>69</sup> Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, pp.266-67.

<sup>70</sup> E. Band, *Working His Purpose Out: The History of the English Presbyterian Mission, 1847-1947* (London, 1948), pp.572-73. Between 1924 and 1930 the EPM had a net loss of 22 staff, "Reinforcements", enclosed in "Minutes of the Amoy Mission Council, February 3rd to 10th 1931", EPMA South Fukien Box 12. On funding problems see, for example, H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 14/11/29, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 400.

### III Reforms

#### Foreign Staff - Purging the Unsuitable

Many societies, from the start of the evacuation in 1926-27 and throughout the whole process of return and into the early 1930s, weeded out those they felt had become unsuitable, or whose unsuitabilities had come to be perceived as unhelpful, and those that Chinese mission workers intimated, or stated, were no longer welcome. Missions responded to similar criticisms of their personnel by Chinese workers as were directed against British businesses.<sup>71</sup> Undiplomatic individual behaviour continued to be a contentious issue after the return of missionaries in 1928, especially in educational institutions.<sup>72</sup>

Miss Harrison, at the Lester Chinese Hospital in Shanghai, was sent home by the LMS ostensibly on "medical grounds" but really because of "temperamental difficulties". She was "not fitted for the fine team-work, and the understanding of the hundred and one little things that show under the polite exterior of a Chinese staff"; neither was Miss L.K. Rayner in Hong Kong. Dora Clarke, an LMS matron, who countermanded the orders of Chinese doctors, was eased out as it was feared that her attitude towards the Chinese staff "might easily provoke very serious consequences". Dr. E.F. Wills was also "temperamentally unsuited" to the new conditions.<sup>73</sup>

The WMMS was keen only to allow the return of those "acceptable to the Chinese". This excluded B.B. Chapman, with his "perhaps unconsciously overbearing temperament", a Mr Helps, the Rev Lindsay, who was "somewhat lacking in tact and sympathy and... not a persona grata to the Chinese", and Mr Scholes, "who had given offence in one or two directions almost past bearing."<sup>74</sup> Quaker Chinese dropped hints

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<sup>71</sup> See Clifford M. Stubbs on the Quaker's Sichuan Yearly Meeting when the issue was discussed, circular letter, 23/1/28, FSC CH/13.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, the results of the behaviour of one "impatient" foreigner at the West China Union University in Chengdu, W.G. Sewell, journal letter, c.October 1928, Sewell papers, SOAS PP MS 16/3.

<sup>73</sup> L.K. Rayner to F.H. Hawkins, 6/3/28, 18/6/28, LMS South China Box 25; J.L.H. Paterson to F.H. Hawkins, 30/11/29, LMS Central China Box 43; T.C. Brown to F.H. Hawkins, 1/5/30, J.L.H. Paterson to F.H. Hawkins, 22/5/30, LMS Central China Box 46; Miss W.J. Coxon to F.H. Hawkins, 11/12/30, LMS Central China Box 48.

<sup>74</sup> W.W. Gibson to C.W. Andrews, 20/12/27, WMMSA Hunan Correspondence fiche 212; H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 27/2/28, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence fiche 387; H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 17/9/29, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence, Fiche 399; C.W. Andrews to Edgar Dewstoe, 27/3/28, WMMSA South China Correspondence, fiche 576; H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 28/3/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 389.

about the suitability or otherwise of British workers, and stated their desire only for "certain types" to return.<sup>75</sup>

The BMS asked Priscilla Willis to resign in September 1927 for "tactless interference". H.H. Rowley eventually resigned in protest against school registration, but his attitude was later described as combining "racial antipathy, political prejudice and self-confidence". Emily Pentelow was not wanted back. She intervened during classes taught by Chinese teachers and was rude, or withdrawn, towards her Chinese colleagues. Her superiors put it down to nervousness, but it gave an unfortunate impression.<sup>76</sup> The CIM also decided that the old, unhealthy and those unable "to adapt his or her mind to the new conditions" should not be allowed to return. They also sent individuals who had caused particular problems back to different districts.<sup>77</sup>

This was not a phenomenon unique to British organisations, many North American missionaries did not return.<sup>78</sup> Many others in all societies resigned from ill-health or because of the trying experiences of the revolutionary years.<sup>79</sup>

### New Staff

A proportion of these missionaries were replaced; the WMMS saw a need for *more* foreign workers while the CIM launched its programme of expansion.<sup>80</sup> This infusion of new workers was an opportunity for missions to adapt to changes at a greater pace and with greater ease. The CIM used the opportunity to use the experienced workers to establish new missions while allocating existing missions to new workers, uninfluenced by past-association or habits of leadership and authority, and theoretically more able to work liberally with the Chinese.<sup>81</sup> Missions were widely aware that their

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<sup>75</sup> H.T. Silcock to Dr P.S. Lo and others, 19/9/28, FSC CH/11 Typed Letters to China Vol. 3, 1925-1928; Clifford Stubbs, circular Letter, 23/1/28, FSC CH/13.

<sup>76</sup> Margaret Thomas to E.M. Bowser, 1/7/29, BMSA CH/75; H.H. Rowley to C.E. Wilson, 4/1/29, C.E. Wilson to H.H. Rowley, 2/12/29, BMSA CH/64; Francis E. Coombes to M.E. Bowser, 17/7/29, BMSA CH/69.

<sup>77</sup> CIM London Council Minutes, 9/5/28, 14/11/28.

<sup>78</sup> A.J. Austin, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom 1888-1959* (Toronto, 1986), pp.219-20.

<sup>79</sup> CCYB 1928, pp.114-15. The BMS had 142 missionaries in 1925 but never regained this figure, which remained around 100 until the Sino-Japanese War, Williamson, *British Baptists*, p.276; In 1927 there were 8,250 Protestant missionaries of all nationalities allotted to missions in China, the following year 4,375. By 1930 this figure had only reached 6,346, and until 1936 it fluctuated below that figure, C.L. Boynton and C.D. Boynton, eds., *1936 Handbook of the Christian Movement in China under Protestant Auspices* (Shanghai, 1936), p.ix.

<sup>80</sup> R. Rees, WMMSA Synod Minutes 1928, fiche 196. The CIM saw off 23 workers from Britain in 1930, its highest ever yearly total, CR, September 1931, p.602.

<sup>81</sup> Leslie T. Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible: The China Inland Mission 1865-1965* (London, 1965), pp.100-102; *China's Millions*, 15/3/29.

new workers should be prepared to work on different terms with the Chinese than formerly.<sup>82</sup> This was accompanied by a desire for a better quality mission staff than was previously used.<sup>83</sup> Lack of professionalism, such as the behaviour of some of the nursing staff, exacerbated these problems. Difficulties in getting sufficiently motivated and well educated workers after the Great War arose from the general economic and social changes affecting missions. "Uncultured" staff in the field, who gave up too easily and failed to learn Chinese adequately, were a problem. A higher all-round education, instead of faith and a smattering of theology, was required of a wider range of staff. Inattention to Chinese language study in the past was to be corrected.<sup>84</sup> This applied especially to nursing and medical staff, but also to evangelical workers. The Rev. A.A. Taylor and his wife [LMS] were not allowed to return to China and were recommended for service elsewhere, "where their lack of early cultural environment will not tell against them with the people whom they hope to influence".<sup>85</sup>

There were problems integrating this new wave of idealists, some of whose principles led to friction within the missions. Established patterns of mission socialisation could not quickly adapt, nor could the institutional and physical structures of mission life be expected to change quickly enough to accommodate progressive idealists. One such couple fell out with the Central China District of the LMS in 1930 (they "misunderstood distinctions that sometimes had to be made but do not indicate any failure in Christian grace") and Henry Marsden outraged his colleagues with his criticisms of their relations with the Chinese. He was said to "not have appreciated the meaning of team-work". The dictates of mission solidarity were strong and Marsden left the LMS in 1929.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> "Any attempt to introduce a colour bar is un-Christian and offensive, and I do not think I could advise you to send anyone out to China under any such disability." W.W. Gibson to C.W. Andrews, 23/12/27, WMMSA Hunan fiche 212.

<sup>83</sup> C.W. Andrews to H.B. Rattenbury, 14/2/28, WMMSA, Hupeh fiche 388; H.B. Rattenbury to W.A. Grist, 17/6/31, WMMSA, Hupeh fiche 406.

<sup>84</sup> "Days have changed and a really effective knowledge of the spoken language is necessary," H.J.P. Anderson to Maclagan, 14/3/29, EPMA South Fukien Box 11.

<sup>85</sup> W.I. Coxon to F.H. Hawkins, 10/12/29, LMS Central China Box 44; it was suggested "that he might get a lonely station in the South Seas" where his ability to "do anything in the house with his hands... would come in useful", Mabel L. Geller to F.H. Hawkins, 6/12/29. In fact to Geller's horror he was sent to India where the "need for cultured gentlemen" was even greater, *ibid.* Taylor was working class, a former docks clerk who left school at the age of 14 and had only returned to study in preparation for the mission, LMS Candidates Papers, Box 32. In 1930 his service with the LMS ended, Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society, 1895-1945* (London, 1954), p.620.

<sup>86</sup> T. Cocker Brown to F.H. Hawkins, 29/3/30, LMS Central China Box 46; C.G. Sparham to F.H. Hawkins, 28/12/28, LMS Central China Box 45; Goodall, *History of the London Missionary Society*, p.611.

### New Work

It was apparent that mission work could no longer be targeted largely at the villages of China and the Chinese peasantry. This historical solution to the steadfast opposition of the Chinese bureaucratic elite was inadequate on two counts. Firstly, the Chinese elite was now more Westernized than ever before and also stronger and more successfully anti-imperialist than ever before. For the mission enterprise to continue it needed to reach an accommodation with those elites at national and local levels and to accelerate and modernise the educational work it had begun in the early years of the century. For their part the "better educated classes" were felt by some to show a greater willingness and openness to Christian work, than was historically the case.<sup>87</sup> Missionaries who would have been suitable "fifty-years ago" for 'muscular' work in the villages (such as A.A. Taylor) were now expected to interact intelligently with educated Chinese. Explicit inability to do this caused some to be eased out of Chinese mission work.

Secondly, the economic plight of the Chinese peasant was leading some societies to commit workers and funds to "social" goals, such as the work of John Lossing Buck (initially of the American Presbyterian Mission, North) and his co-workers at Nanjing.<sup>88</sup> This was accompanied by work with those caught up in China's industrial centres, such as that of Dame Adelaide Anderson and others dealing with industrial conditions in Shanghai. For example, an attempt was made to force the SMC to improve child labour conditions in 1925 but this was defeated by the political crisis.<sup>89</sup> J.B. Tayler of the LMS took over the work and the files of Joseph Bailie, a pioneer worker for labour reform in Shanghai.<sup>90</sup> Both of these themes were debated over and over in the *Chinese Recorder*, which gave much space to the Social Gospel view, the importance of which also reflected the interest taken in it by Chinese organisations such as the Chinese YMCA and the NCC and, it was felt, by Chinese students in general.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> W.F. Dawson to F.H. Hawkins, 22/1/31, LMS North China Box 28. By 1931, of course, the dictatorial National Government considered radical political or social work politically suspect and this may have caused an increased interest in Christian Social work, Eastman, *Abortive Revolution*, pp.20-30.

<sup>88</sup> T. Cocker Brown, Decennial Report 1930, LMS Central China Reports Box 11; Buck directed the important survey work which appeared as *Chinese Farm Economy* (Nanjing, 1930) and *Land Utilization in China* (Nanjing, 1937).

<sup>89</sup> Adelaide Mary Anderson, *Humanity and Labour in China: An Industrial Visit and its Sequel, (1923 to 1926)* (London, 1928).

<sup>90</sup> J.B. Tayler "Annual Report" 1930, LMS Central China Box 11 Reports, folder 5.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, the articles on "The Chinese Christian Espouses Social Evangelism" in *CR*, May 1931, *passim*.; "It appears that most of these students seek a religion of activity heading up mainly in social effort", *CR*, August 1931, p.524; "A Christian Economist", "Christian Industry for China", *IRM*, October 1931, pp.575-86. See also Shirley Garrett, *Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970), *passim*.

#### IV Sinification Union Organisations

The development of Chinese control of union organisations initially worried many British observers who were concerned about their involvement in what were seen as purely political affairs.<sup>92</sup> Some conservatives felt that they were unrepresentative bodies, in thrall to Nationalist politics and too influential with Home Mission Boards. As tempers cooled in the aftermath of the Revolution it became apparent that sinification was unstoppable. The necessity of sending good foreign delegates was soon realised.<sup>93</sup> The Chinese element in the NCC was strengthened in 1927 and in the following year there was a reorganisation after which both missionary and Chinese delegates were to be elected by the Chinese Churches. This strengthened the Chinese character of the NCC and it had the apparent virtue, for more hostile foreign observers, of strengthening the moderate presence in an organisation which had been set up, some felt, merely in order to act as a safety valve for Chinese Christians.<sup>94</sup> The Nurses Association of China (which had 972 Chinese members and 437 foreign ones) voted to appoint a Chinese General Secretary, to join the two foreign ones, in 1928.<sup>95</sup> The composition of the executive committee of the China Christian Education Association was changed from 7 Westerners and 7 Chinese in 1928 to 11 Chinese and 4 Westerners in 1931.<sup>96</sup> Chinese churches took over much of the supervisory work of Bible colporteurs after 1927. A South China Bible Society was set up in December that year (against initial opposition) to take over British and Foreign Bible Society work in that region. An East China Bible Society was formed in 1934 but integration was slow.<sup>97</sup>

Some of this sinification was literally nominal. The *China Mission Year Book* became the *China Christian Year Book* in 1926, and the previous year the China Medical Missionary Association had become the China Medical Association. These changes were, none the less, symbolic, and did reveal shifts in emphasis from foreign mission to Chinese institution.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The CIM withdrew from the National Christian Council and the Chinese YMCA, partly for theological reasons but also because of their opposition to what they considered to be the politicisation of these organisations, *National Christian Council Bulletin*, June 1926, p.19, SOAS CBMS E/T China 4.

<sup>93</sup> H.J.P. Anderson to MacLagan, 22/2/29, BMSA South Fukien Box 11; A.W. Hooker to E. Dewstoe, 30/1/30, WMMSA South China fiche 587.

<sup>94</sup> *CCYB* 1928, p.72; *CCYB* 1929, p.225; Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.215.

<sup>95</sup> *Nurses Association of China: Report of Conference 1928* (Shanghai, 1928), p.18.

<sup>96</sup> *ER*, April 1928, p.220; *ER*, October 1931, p.517.

<sup>97</sup> Roe, *British and Foreign Bible Society*, pp.341, 344-46.

<sup>98</sup> *CMYB* 1925, pp.301-302.



### Church structures

Indigenisation was a major theme in mission and Chinese Christian debate before 1925. The ideal of the missions had always been to foster self-governing, self-financing and self-propagating churches. The actual attainment of this ideal was patchy.<sup>99</sup> The 1922 China National Christian Conference (the first with a majority of Chinese delegates and a Chinese chairman) had built on previous slow progress and created the National Christian Council, which was intended to help protestant missions work towards sinification.<sup>100</sup> It also set in motion the formation of a Church of Christ in China [CCC] (*Zhongguo jidujiaohui*), which held its first general assembly in 1927. This was an interdenominational body mainly composed of Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches. The crisis of 1925-7 prompted many other groups to join or to contemplate joining, sometimes in great haste.<sup>101</sup> The LMS was more enthusiastic about the CCC and joined at its inception.<sup>102</sup> Initially they were more concerned with their own Churches, but in 1928 the China Advisory Council declared its "willingness,... to accept appointment by, and work under, the direction of the Chinese Church".<sup>103</sup> Other boards, suspicious of the politics, or opposed to the theology of the CCC, contemplated or enacted transfers of power from their missions to their Churches. Cautious progress was then underway in some regions but missions were such a target of the troubles after 1925 that the process was accelerated. The Shanghai Council of the CIM, for example, announced the need for "more speedy carrying out of the original policy of the Mission to establish self-supporting and self-propagating churches." By 1931 the key aim of the CIM's forward movement was said to be the "rapid transfer to Chinese leadership of the pastoral care and oversight of the Chinese Churches."<sup>104</sup> The Anglican Church in China was formally

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, C. Peter Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy* (Leiden, 1990), pp.258-63.

<sup>100</sup> F. Rawlinson, ed., *The Chinese Church as Revealed in the National Christian Conference Held in Shanghai, Tuesday, May 2, to Thursday May 11, 1922* (Shanghai, 1922), Opening addresses, pp.30-40; Latourette, *History of Christian Missions*, pp.796-98.

<sup>101</sup> *London Missionary Society: Report of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Advisory Council for China held at Shanghai, February 20th - March 2nd 1928* (Shanghai, 1928), Appendix II "First General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China", pp.76-78; A.L. Warnshuis, "Changes in Missionary Policies and Methods in China: North American Boards", *IRM*, 17, (April 1928), pp.306-308.

<sup>102</sup> *CMYB 1925*, pp.123-29; *CCYB 1928*, p.84.

<sup>103</sup> *London Missionary Society: Report of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Advisory Council for China 1928*, pp.3-7.

<sup>104</sup> CIM London Council Minutes, 1/2/28; In Gansu the CIM area conference in 1918 had been a solely missionary meeting. In 1921 missionaries and Chinese were in equal numbers and in 1924 all Chinese church leaders and all missionaries were present and meetings held in Chinese. The abandoned 1927 meeting was due to contain only a limited

recognised as an independent "constituent member" of the Anglican Communion in 1930 whilst at diocesan levels the direction of missionary labour and the handling of funds was transferred region by region to diocesan, that is Chinese Church, boards.<sup>105</sup>

Different approaches characterised the reforms of different missions. The LMS was more open to reform than the publicly more cautious WMMS which was eager to lay stress on working together "with no question of who is head and who is tail."<sup>106</sup> The BMS in Xiamen accepted in principle the transfer of authority over missionary allocation to its Church Synod Committee in 1928, a procedure adopted by all 3 mission councils in November that year.<sup>107</sup> Variations may also have been related to geographical factors. H.B. Rattenbury was based in the treaty port of Hankou and the EPM Amoy Mission Council was also rather conservative (it accepted the "Church-centric principle in general" but did not wish to see it extended to medical and educational work).<sup>108</sup> CMS missionaries in West China effectively stalled organisational changes which handed authority over to their Church in 1928 and in its South China Victoria diocese, based in Hong Kong, the devolution of authority to the Church in 1929 was actually reversed in 1935. The presence of British congregations in colonial Hong Kong had previously been used to justify the establishment of a segregated Chinese-only Synod in 1913. It was claimed that British lay Anglicans would be unwilling to accept Chinese direction of Church affairs.<sup>109</sup>

The devolution of authority to Chinese churches involved many thorny issues - the ownership of church property, the control of mission funds and the final control of the direction of mission efforts and the place of the mission in general. Sinification often meant the merging of church and mission structures and the subordination of missionaries to the authority of the Chinese church. Transferring mission property to the Chinese church symbolised in concrete form the state of relations between Church and Mission and for these reasons was requested by the CCC in 1928.<sup>110</sup> The role of the mission

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number of missionaries and was to be a primarily Chinese Church affair. The 1927 evacuation saw the "compulsory handing of responsibility for the church matters to the Chinese church leaders", E.J. Mann, "Autobiography", Chapter 7, "The Daily Round", pp.7-8, Mann Papers, SOAS MSS 380302/3; *China's Millions*, July 1931, p.120.

<sup>105</sup> Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.219, 225, 280, 286.

<sup>106</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 23/12/27, Andrews to Rattenbury, 24/1/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 387; Andrews to Rattenbury, 14/2/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 388.

<sup>107</sup> "Amoy Mission Council Minutes, April 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 1928" and H.J.P. Anderson to Maclagan, 5/12/28, BMSA South Fukien Box 11.

<sup>108</sup> R.A. Rogers to Maclagan, 8/4/29, EPMA South Fukien Box 11; "Minutes of the Amoy Mission Council April 25th to May 1st 1930", EPMA South Fukien Box 12.

<sup>109</sup> Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, pp.286, 224-26.

<sup>110</sup> Maclagan to H.J.P. Anderson, 6/6/28, EPMA Fukien South Box 11; "Memorandum from the FFMA China Council on the Question of Transference of

councils in China was questioned by some Chinese Christians. Missionaries were, unsurprisingly given the nature of the missionary vocation, unwilling to abolish their own jobs and were anxious to stress their continued usefulness. In response to such pressures, for example, the EPM announced that communications between the PCE and the Chinese Presbyterian Church would continue to be routed through the EPM Mission Councils.<sup>111</sup>

These issues and the nature of relations between Britons and Chinese within the Churches and missions, were influenced by perceptions of the Chinese character and abilities, and the expectations raised by missionary lifestyles. Such points involved questions of financial and doctrinal distrust. There was a grave danger, thought the CIM's London Council, that "power may fall into the hands of unspiritual men, as the true spiritual leaders do not necessarily come to the front." H.F. Wallace of the EPM foresaw "endless suspicions and slanders and faction feuds" resulting from the devolution of financial responsibility.<sup>112</sup> Some feared that their "dramatic instinct" would sweep Chinese Christians into evangelistic excesses if there was no doctrinally consistent restraint from foreign supervisors.<sup>113</sup>

Many of these reservations were, of course, part of the long term debate about the process of conversion and the propagation of Christian churches. Christianity in China was still fairly recent and Chinese society was not Christian. It was in this context that the events of the 1920s unfolded. The problems of "indigenisation" acquired new political urgency and needed radical short-term solutions if the missions were not to lose their work altogether.

### Staff

The appointment of Chinese to staff mission educational and medical posts was the most visible aspect of sinification and was what was usually meant by the debate. The BMS announced that they were happy to appoint qualified Chinese leaders in all areas of Church work but stressed that this was not a process of replacement (which implied a responsibility on the part of the mission society to pay for them, or to pay for them at the same rate as foreign workers) but was a transference of *all* responsibilities.<sup>114</sup> Chinese

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Mission Property to the Chinese Church" 1927, FSC China Committee Minutes, vol. VI, p.137-38; A.R. Kepler to Secretary of the FMC of the EPMA, 19/4/28, EPMA Box 60a.

<sup>111</sup> "Minutes of the Amoy Mission Council January 26th to February 2nd 1929" in H.J.P. Anderson to MacLagan, 22/2/29, BMSA South Fukien Box 11; Secretary, Mission Council to All Councils, 22/7/29, EPMA South Fukien, Box 11; a similar reservation was announced by the CMS in Hong Kong, Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.225.

<sup>112</sup> CIM London Council Minutes, 2/1/29; H.F. Wallace to MacLagan, 30/6/27, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 44.

<sup>113</sup> "Wukingfu Girls School Report for 1931," EPMA Hakka Box 28; H.M. Moncrief to MacLagan, 11/9/28, EPMA South Fukien Box 19.

<sup>114</sup> BMSA China Sub-Committee Minutes, Vol. No.10, 31/5/27, 28/7/28.

church officials were, naturally, not always happy with this insistence but during the period of the evacuation Chinese Christians, if it was politically possible or expedient, generally got on competently with Church affairs themselves.<sup>115</sup> Some were independent (or "bolshvised") enough to demand only the return of missionary "advisors."<sup>116</sup>

There was another aspect to indigenisation. This was a necessary process of sinification of what were specifically mission or mission support posts, especially in medical and educational areas. Social and intellectual changes were such that within the BMS it was thought that "a third class of mission worker,... the Chinese worker with a foreign training" would have to be recognised.<sup>117</sup> This led to debates about the best way of getting and retaining Chinese workers which were also common in debate in British business circles in China. In the LMS it was pointed out that there was now no need for clerical missionaries, as so much work was being devolved into Chinese hands; this was especially true for nursery and primary schools where more administrative and teaching work could be done by Chinese teachers.<sup>118</sup> The sentiments of the Synod Advisory Council of the WMMS Hupeh District were similar to those of the SMC when it came to training up Chinese leaders in positions of smaller responsibility in preparation for their taking over of more important posts.<sup>119</sup> Getting suitable staff for schools and hospitals would also mean having to pay them more than Chinese staff had been paid before, paying them at the rates for comparable work outside the missions and, in some cases, almost on Western lines.<sup>120</sup> It had been stated before, and was reconfirmed, that they would need to be given "a better status, more opportunity and more responsibility."<sup>121</sup> These moves raised new financial problems. In 1929 a Dr Hsia of the Central China

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<sup>115</sup> See a description of a "terrific fight" over the matter of financial authority at the Wuchang District Synod of the WMMS in 1929, H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 14/5/29, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 197.

<sup>116</sup> "They have managed so splendidly on their own initiative that I simply do not count nowadays, and am very often not even asked to join in things" was one plaintive response, Mrs Geller to F.H. Hawkins, 22/7/29, LMS North China Box 11; W.W. Gibson to C.W. Andrews, 23/12/27, WMMSA Hunan fiche 212.

<sup>117</sup> BMSA China Sub-Committee Minutes, Vol. No.10, 20/7/28.

<sup>118</sup> "For which we may be devoutly thankful", E.H. Clayton, "The Place of the Foreigner in Secondary Schools", *ER*, January 1928, p.41; L.G. Philips to F.H. Hawkins, 13/7/31, enclosing "Minutes of Fukien District Committee, July 1931", LMS China Fukien Box 16.

<sup>119</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 26/12/27, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 387.

<sup>120</sup> See Rattenbury's comments on the Headmastership of Wesley College in Hankow, H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 20/4/28, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 389; Miss Gwenfrom Moss to F.H. Hawkins, 9/11/31, LMS North China Box 29.

<sup>121</sup> *Visitation of the Work of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in China, 1920. By Rev C.W. Andrews, B.D., (General Secretary) and Dr. F. Percy Wagfield (Medical Secretary). Report of the Deputation*, [London, 1920], p.33. WMMSA.

District of the LMS insisted on taking a furlough and expected financial arrangements comparable to those enjoyed by foreign mission workers (in this case 7 months paid leave and return travel expenses to Britain), to the impotent consternation of the District Council.<sup>122</sup>

Societies did begin to appoint more Chinese staff to mission educational and medical positions as well as to positions on joint organisations. The British and Foreign Bible Society appointed its first Chinese colporteur-supervisors after 1927 [five by 1929] although the regional sub-heads remained exclusively foreign until 1936.<sup>123</sup> In 1931, for the first time, the LMS in North China had ordained Chinese mission workers in its employ. There was a recognised "dire need" for Chinese ministers in the Hunan District of the WMMS and by 1928 in their Hupeh District they had a Chinese minister in every Circuit or one on trial. In 1931 at the Hupeh Synod there were even three "pukker Chinese Deaconesses".<sup>124</sup> The CIM aimed to train up Chinese evangelists more rapidly while the Amoy Mission Council of the EPM voted to appoint itinerant Chinese pastors instead of missionaries for "station visitation and the direction of the evangelistic enterprise in the country districts."<sup>125</sup>

### Education

There had been debate within mission circles about the direction and nature of mission education before 1927. The 1921-22 China Educational Commission recommended greater integration of schools with the Chinese national and provincial educational systems. Many schools were seriously disrupted by Chinese students, and sometimes staff, as a result of political disturbances starting with the campaign for Educational Rights Recovery in 1924. By 1928 when mission schools and colleges were starting to reopen, it was realised that an "entirely new situation" was facing mission educationalists in which "the foreigner has no business in a position that could be occupied creditably by a Chinese associate."<sup>126</sup>

<sup>122</sup> T. Cocker Brown to F.H. Hawkins, 30/1/29, LMS Central China Box 42; see also Maclagan to Paton, 24/6/29, EPMA Hakka Box 30a.

<sup>123</sup> Roe, *British and Foreign Bible Society*, pp.336, 343.

<sup>124</sup> E.S. Box, "Annual Report 1931", LMS North China Reports Box 11; W.W. Gibson to C.W. Andrews, 27/12/27, WMMSA Hunan fiche 212; H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 14/2/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 388; Dorothy Hill to Hornby, 3/5/31, WMMSA WW Hupeh fiche 132.

<sup>125</sup> *China's Millions*, July 1931, p.120; "Minutes of the Amoy Mission Council January 26th to February 2nd 1929", H.J.P. Anderson to Maclagan, 22/2/29, EPMA South Fukien Box 11. This Church function was still undertaken by the Mission because the South Fukien Church Synod could not afford to pay for it, *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> J.G. Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, New York, 1971), pp.232-70; E.W. Wallace, "The Outlook for Christian Education in China", *IRM*, 17, (January 1928), p.211; *ER*, January 1928, p.6.

In 1928, as part of its consolidation of political control, the Nationalist Government enacted educational legislation requiring the registration of all schools.<sup>127</sup> To be registered it was necessary for all schools to have Chinese heads and predominantly Chinese boards of governors or trustees. This aspect of registration was widely accepted, and carried out, by mission societies, it was, after all, a "wise thing to do", and some schools had already devolved such authority.<sup>128</sup> Most were happy with the results, which in some cases seem to have improved relations with Chinese staff, and restored discipline among rebellious students in ways no longer possible for foreign principals in the still politicised educational atmosphere.<sup>129</sup> Other measures were introduced unilaterally by schools and colleges, such as racial equality in salary scales at Yenching University and elsewhere and a general diminution of the influence on college affairs of foreign staffs.<sup>130</sup> However, the continued mission presence in schools made for awkward relationships, especially as they affected missionaries who had previously worked in more leading roles, and it was expected that the strain of the new subordinate relationship would be too much for some.<sup>131</sup> New recruits were preferred, such as Mr Monro at Medhurst College, Shanghai, who had "the right attitude towards the new regime of Chinese control in the college, and towards Chinese students [had] a feeling of intelligent sympathy".<sup>132</sup>

A further aspect of registration was the formal banning of religious education as part of the curriculum. This caused some resignations as societies opted to secularise the formal curriculum and concentrate more broadly on Christian education. The China Inland Mission was not happy about registration, but the BMS Home Committee accepted it in 1931.<sup>133</sup> The public displays of Christianity widely demanded, even if only implicitly, by mission colleges and school were a sensitive issue, and were also

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<sup>127</sup> Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, 255-70.

<sup>128</sup> Earl Herbert Cressy, "Christian education in 1928," *CCYB* 1928, pp.270-72; A.L. Warnshuis, "Changes in Missionary Policies and Methods in China", *IRM*, 17, (April 1928), pp.312-14; S.K. Laird, Report, 21/1/30, WMMSA South China fiche 204.

<sup>129</sup> E.M. Bolton to Miss Hunter, 1/1/27, WMMSA WW Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 122; Miss Eva Spicer to F.H. Hawkins, 1/1/29, LMS Central China Box 44; C.W. Knott to F.H. Hawkins, 25/4/29, and enclosures, LMS Central China Box 45; Mira Cumber to Mr Butler, 8/6/28, FSC CH/6; James Watson to C.E. Wilson, 14/7/27, BMSA CH/67.

<sup>130</sup> Philip West, *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations, 1916-1952* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976), pp.118-20; T. Cocker Brown to F.H. Hawkins, 13/11/29, LMS Central China Box 42.

<sup>131</sup> Jeannie Ewing to Miss Moore, 5/1/28, Ewing to Miss Johnston, EPMA WMA South Fukien Reports; C.G. Sparham to F.H. Hawkins, 28/6/8, LMS Central China Box 44.

<sup>132</sup> Miss Catherine M. Robertson to F.H. Hawkins, 29/5/28, LMS Central China Box 43.

<sup>133</sup> H.W. Burdett to C.E. Wilson, 27/7/27, BMSA CH/56; H.H. Rowley to C.E. Wilson, 22/9/27, 4/1/29, BMSA CH/64; CIM London Council Minutes, 2/1/29, 10/12/30; Williamson, *British Baptists*, p.136.

incompatible with the modernisation of mission education. At their graduation ceremony in 1928 the students of the West China Union University at Chengdu were each handed a bible. Such displays, they complained, lowered the value of the education they had received and gave the impression that they had to make a public profession of Christianity to obtain their degrees.<sup>134</sup> Fearful of registration but also fearful of losing pupils the CIM in London stressed to opponents of the process in China the necessity of continuing to teach "secular subjects to secure pupils".<sup>135</sup>

Justification of fear of Chinese control was usually expressed as a distrust of Chinese educationalists diluting the Christian character of schools and colleges and generally lowering educational standards.<sup>136</sup> Some felt, especially British educationalists and their supporters, that it represented a threat to British public-school educational methods. These defined, implicitly, a dismissive attitude to Chinese social and educational customs. Dr Lavington Hart, headmaster of the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, was praised by the Consul-General for what he saw as the spreading of the "English public school spirit in China;" his work there was "appropriately covered by the Motto of the Order of the British Empire which is "For God and Empire".<sup>137</sup> E.H. Clayton felt that foreigners would remain in schools as advisors, helped by the "prevalent and laudable spirit of willingness to profit from advice" shown by the Chinese. Raising the tone of a college and the character building of students through the inculcation of "Good Sportsmanship" and "fair play" were the specialities of British teachers; they needed reinforcing through continued British presence as they were "not quite strong yet - there is still a desire to cheer when the other man makes a mess of anything."<sup>138</sup>

### Medicine

Sinification of healthwork involved two basic processes; firstly, the provision of better-paid opportunities and more responsibilities for Chinese doctors; secondly, the devolution of control of medical missions to the Chinese churches. Both processes were intimately tied up with a third - the improvement of the standard of medical work. Despite such obvious exceptions as the Peking Union Medical College the 1922 *Survey*

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<sup>134</sup> W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 10/7/28, Sewell papers, SOAS PP MS 16/3.

<sup>135</sup> CIM London Council Minutes, 10/12/30.

<sup>136</sup> *ER*, January 1928, p.5; "What will Missionaries expect of the New Leaders of Schools and Colleges?," pp.121-23, *ER*, April 1928; "Memorandum on Lutien Anglo-Chinese School, 24/1/29" in Miss Catherine Robertson to F.H. Hawkins, 27/2/29, LMS Central China Box 43.

<sup>137</sup> Tientsin No.54, 24/7/29, FO228\4032\2 50n.

<sup>138</sup> "The Place of the Foreigner - Secondary Schools," *ER*, January 1928, pp.41-42; see also the companion article by J.S. Barr [LMS], "The Foreigner in the Middle School", *ibid.*, pp.43-45; W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 3/9/27, FSC CH/5/5.

of mission work had revealed an appalling overall picture of medical work.<sup>139</sup> The situation in some hospitals - as regards standards of hygiene - often appalled doctors and new recruits fresh from Britain.<sup>140</sup> It was also widely recognised that the prevailing general standards threatened the continuation of medical work, especially if the National Government chose to register teaching hospitals and nursing schools as it had educational establishments.<sup>141</sup> The longer-term threat, however, lay in the inability of mission hospitals, as generally constituted and run, to appeal to bourgeois Chinese patients whose expectations of standards of cleanliness and comfort had greatly increased, in sickness, as in health - as steamship companies were realising.<sup>142</sup> Improvements were aimed at this class, who would thereby be subsidising the more charitable aspects of hospital work and making up for the shortfall in funds from abroad.<sup>143</sup> The medical missionary establishment in China had overreached itself and was far too large to be supported from Britain. This was, of course, a historical legacy, and one arising from the basic contradiction of medical work, its attempt to engage in medical and evangelical work in tandem.<sup>144</sup> It also led to another basic problem of professionalisation - it tended to dilute the evangelical aspect of medical work; comments about the "heavy drinking" and "public frequenting of cabarets and other places" by "irreligious" professionals on the Peking Union Medical College [PUMC] staff, for example, were common.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> *The Christian Occupation of China: A General Survey of the Numerical Strength and Geographical Distribution of the Christian Forces in China made by the Special Committee on Survey and Occupation, China Continuation Committee 1918-1921* (Shanghai, 1922), pp.429-41; see also Harold Balme, *China and Modern Medicine: A Study in Medical Missionary Development* (London, 1921), pp.104-106.

<sup>140</sup> "Our large upper wards have no bathroom, closets, or baggage room or pantry attached to them. A patient has to go out o the building for a bath. An insanitary covered pail is under each bed," "Plan of Suggested Alterations in WMA Hospital Swatow", in Dr Winifred Heyworth to Miss Mitchel, 19/10/26, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 34. E.H. Scott, "First Impressions of the Swatow Hospitals," 17/2/31, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 38.

<sup>141</sup> H. Ross and W. Heyworth to P.J. Maclagan, 26/4/26, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 34; "Chuanchow Womens' Hospital Report 1929" in H.J.P. Anderson to Maclagan, 3/10/30 EPMA South Fukien Box 12.

<sup>142</sup> "There is a growing feeling against contributing large sums to an institution [the EPM mission hospital in Shantou] which lays itself out to treat only those who cannot afford to pay for their treatment, and makes no special provision for better class patients who can afford to pay," D. Fraser, H.R. Watt, Campbell Gibson and G. Burt to P.J. Maclagan, 25/7/30, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 38; Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, pp.274-75.

<sup>143</sup> H.R. Worth, "Swatow Women's Hospital Annual Report, 1929", EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 34.

<sup>144</sup> "A medical work on the large scale proposed might bring us kudos, but would it be effective from the missionary point of view in any proportion to its size and cost?" Maclagan to S.W. Carruthers, 27/11/30, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 38.

<sup>145</sup> E.C. Lobenstine to F.H. Hawkins, 19/6/29, LMS Central China Box 43.



The 1922 *Survey* identified the "crux" of the problem as staff and urged an increase in foreign staff numbers to make up for the shortfall in Chinese doctors, who were also not impressed by mission standards - in their case of pay and accommodation, and, traditionally, of status.<sup>146</sup> Increasing foreign staff numbers was no longer economically or politically affordable by the end of the decade. Unfortunately for missions, Chinese doctors, even those trained by missions, were still unwilling to work in mission hospitals.<sup>147</sup> Some efforts were made to arrange foreign salaries for suitable candidates, or salaries which competed with the rates they would receive elsewhere in China.<sup>148</sup> This was not always possible, but more Chinese doctors were employed and at market rates.<sup>149</sup> By 1932 the EPM was planning to have Chinese workers appointed by "a Chinese body" and "orientated" towards the Chinese church or the institution they worked for, rather than the mission. By sinifying the appointments procedure the mission also intended to suppress salary demands based on foreign rates by distancing itself from the process.<sup>150</sup> Patterns of responsibility, however, could be changed. One LMS doctor, for example, found himself "working with, indeed under, a Chinese Doctor." This did not always prove easy as British doctors usually felt that their own standards of medical hygiene were better than those of their Chinese colleagues.<sup>151</sup>

In a thorough report in 1928, an Inter-Council Conference of the EPM condemned its existing hospitals. It recommended a series of improvements, including organisational measures which would thoroughly anchor their hospitals into the communities they served by allowing the Chinese Churches and public, through Guilds and Chambers of Commerce, to join in their management. The EPM undertook to build a new hospital in Shantou with local Chinese financial contributions and in agreement with the Mayor. The level of sophistication and complexity of business required the appointment of a business manager. Traditionally most hospitals were administered by the foreign doctors

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<sup>146</sup> *Christian Occupation of China*, p.429; Balme, *China and Modern Medicine*, pp.201-202; C.H. Wilson, "China Reports", 16/4/29, BMSA CH/12.

<sup>147</sup> W.W. Gibson to C.W. Andrews, 30/3/29, WMMSA Hunan fiche 215.

<sup>148</sup> H.M. Byles, "Decennial Report 1930", LMS Central China Box 11; MacLagan to H.J.P. Anderson, 25/7/30, EPMA South Fukien Box 12.

<sup>149</sup> Coxon to F.H. Hawkins, 9/7/30, 6/11/30, LMS Central China Box 48; E.H. Scott, "Report on a tour of the Hospitals in the Yangtze Valley, Shanghai and Canton Districts", September 1931, EPMA Lingtung Swatow, Box 38, p.25. "Practically, nowadays, a modern doctor in China can get anything in the way of emoluments, and... everybody is looking for them," H.B. Rattenbury to W.A. Grist, 10/2/31, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 405.

<sup>150</sup> "Inter-Council Conference, 8th - 12th February 1932", EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 12.

<sup>151</sup> C.G. Sparham to F.H. Hawkins, 29/9/28, LMS Central China Box 44; Dr G.C. Dorling, Tientsin Mackenzie Memorial Hospital, "Annual Report for 1930", LMS North China Reports Box 10.

themselves but this was no longer sensible or possible.<sup>152</sup> By 1932 they were planning with a view to "ultimate devolution" of the hospitals to the Chinese Church and a board of trustees, in line with a 1926 plan of the China Medical Association Missionary Division which also interested the LMS.<sup>153</sup> Familiar doubts about "practical problems of ethics and religion" in handing over control to a "local heathen community" were raised by Rattenbury in Hankou.<sup>154</sup> However, where the CMS handed over control to a Chinese Medical Superintendent it was noted that the work flourished, and relations with the local community and authorities flourished.<sup>155</sup>

There were other changes. Both the Peking Union Medical College and the Lester Memorial Hospital in Shanghai, for example, started to employ more nursing sisters. Indeed in some hospitals nurses and nursing procedures were introduced for the first time.<sup>156</sup>

The sinification of the mission presence in China accompanied and characterised its modernisation and professionalization. Like British businesses and municipal institutions in China, British missionaries were no longer able to rely on the explicit protection of the structures of informal empire. As in those other spheres of the British presence they had to make significant compromises, with the *de jure* Chinese state, *de facto* local authorities, and those Chinese they were involved with, as institutions or as individuals. The complacency, encouraged by the post-Boxer decade and the Warlord era, which saw the publication of *The Christian Occupation of China* was anachronistic. This involved a significant shift in their attitudes towards the Chinese. "It had not been realised that in the Christian Church so many competent and responsible Chinese teachers were to be found," recalled H.B. Rattenbury, rather lamely, in 1942. This realisation was such a shock because of the prevailing attitudes towards Chinese capabilities and imputed characteristics.<sup>157</sup> British protestant missions were forced to attempt to transform themselves from "foreign missions" to *Chinese* Christian Church and to compromise with

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<sup>152</sup> "Inter-Council Conference on Mission Work, 17th-20th November, 1928", EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 34; Campbell Gibson to MacLagan, 17/11/31, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 38; E.H. Scott letter, 9/10/30, EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 43a; *Christian Occupation of China*, p.429.

<sup>153</sup> "Inter-Council Conference, February 1932", EPMA Lingtung Swatow Box 12; "Minutes of the Central China District Council, January-February 1928", LMS Central China Box 44.

<sup>154</sup> Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 14/2/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 388.

<sup>155</sup> Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.260.

<sup>156</sup> Miss Sharpe, Annual Report 1930, LMS Central China Box 11; Miss Burt to Mrs Ferguson, 29/7/31, EPMA Lingtung Swatow, Box 35, file 2; Dr Philip Early to C.W. Andrews, 21/12/27, WMMSA South China fiche 583.

<sup>157</sup> H.B. Rattenbury, *Understanding China* (London, 1942), p.63.

modernizing trends in Chinese society, in Chinese Christianity, and in education and in medicine.

### Physical Structures

The proper sinification of personnel and institutional structures also required changes in physical and social structures. To attract sufficiently qualified Chinese professionals, indeed to retain those trained in mission hospitals and colleges, it was realised that the housing traditionally allotted such Chinese staff was inadequate.<sup>158</sup> In some cases Chinese staff, ministers and doctors, allowed to occupy foreign-style mission houses to deter looting or military requisition, were unwilling to leave.<sup>159</sup> What was seen as discrimination by some Chinese professionals was seen by most Britons as part of the psychological necessity of recreating British homes on the mission stations. This phenomenon, of course, was neither exclusively British nor missionary.<sup>160</sup>

Missions' foreign-style buildings themselves created problems. They symbolised the essential foreignness of the mission institutions, and perhaps, of their message. William Sewell was "tempted to wonder if a few plaster houses put up by the Chinese themselves would not have been really better" than the "magnificent buildings" of the West China Union University in Chengdu.<sup>161</sup> Foreign-style mission homes were accused of fostering social isolation and segregation, while the provision of homes along racial lines prolonged racial divisions.<sup>162</sup> Large churches or educational buildings also sent misleading messages about mission society wealth. Their maintenance costs stretched the resources of the mission societies and were often cited as examples of the insupportable burdens that devolution would place on Chinese Churches.<sup>163</sup> Foreign-style buildings were conspicuous and often arrogantly and uncompromisingly foreign, the achievement of a smaller scale fusion of the two increasingly became the aim of Church and educational architecture.<sup>164</sup> The Fitch Memorial Church in Shanghai, completed in 1928, was a good example of this fusion.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Parker Gray and Wilson, *Baptist Mission Society: Report of a Visit to China 1929*, CBMS E/T China 15, Mission reports, Box 361.

<sup>159</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 14/5/29, 14/6/29, WMMSA Hupeh, fiche 392.

<sup>160</sup> Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, pp.128-34.

<sup>161</sup> W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 5 May, 1928. Sewell papers, SOAS PP MS 16/3.

<sup>162</sup> During the 1930s the provision of homes for Yenching staff along racial lines came to an end, West, *Yenching University*, pp.120-21.

<sup>163</sup> C.W. Andrews to H.B. Rattenbury, 25/3/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 389; C.W. Andrews to E. Dewstoe, 4/4/28, WMMSA South China fiche 575.

<sup>164</sup> On wealth see *Report by Mr F.H. Hawkins on his visit to China*, p.164, CBMS E/T China 15.

<sup>165</sup> NCH, 13/10/28, p.63; Rawlinson, *Rawlinson*, p.579.

The geography of building was also important. In 1928 the South China District Committee of the LMS decided to build a new residence in Kowloon rather than on Hong Kong island in order to disassociate themselves from its secular, colonial society by showing the Chinese that "we are in earnest and desire to be placed in the place where we consider work is to be done."<sup>166</sup>

### Social Structures

Alterations to institutional and physical structures needed to be matched by changes in missionary lifestyles and especially social and business relationships. Critics such as E.R. Hughes felt that in the past these had mitigated against the opportunity for close and intimate relations.<sup>167</sup> British Quakers at the 1930 Sichuan Yearly Meeting "took their places freely and naturally in discussion and business, though no longer at the clerk's desk." At the opening of a new Church in Guangzhou it was pointed out that the six Chinese ministers and three Britons were symbolically arranged, by the Chinese organiser, "two Chinese to one English right across the great platform." Tea at meetings of the Senate of the West China Union University at Chengdu was, from 1927, "served by one Chinese and one foreigner. Chinese tea and pastry are served, and one foreign cake." In 1931 the All-China Conference on Religious Education delegates, for the first time, did not divide on racial lines and eat separately.<sup>168</sup> Such measures do seem to have reflected or encouraged changes in patterns of social behaviour at such institutions as colleges and hospitals.<sup>169</sup> Social relations were never without problems raised by cultural differences, but greater efforts had to be made than had been before.<sup>170</sup>

This informal equality in relations was accompanied and confirmed by a sinification of the language of mission work. Mission councils and institutions voted to provide Chinese language minutes of their meetings. Some societies had already begun

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<sup>166</sup> C. Dixon Cousins to F.H. Hawkins, 25/7/28, LMS South China Box 25; Clifford M. Stubbs, open letter, 20/11/27, FSC CH/5/4.

<sup>167</sup> E.A. Preston to F.H. Hawkins, 5/1/29, enclosing E.R. Hughes to E.A. Preston, 19/12/28, LMS China Fukien Box 15.

<sup>168</sup> "Impressions of Experiences of P. and F.G. Burt on their Round the World Tour, 1.11.29 to 1.5.30, as bearing on Quaker Service in the Orient", p.53, CH/10; John Foster, circular letter, 25/10/30, WMMSA South China fiche 593; W.G. Sewell, journal letter 4/5/27, FSC CH/5/4; R. Rees, "All-China Conference on Religious Education", *ER*, October 1931, pp.377-78.

<sup>169</sup> Janet W. Rees, circular letter, May 1929, WMMSA South China fiche 585; Marjorie Benson to Hornby, 29/3/30, WMMSA WW South China fiche 6.

<sup>170</sup> An unfamiliar diet was a problem that defeated Donald Farquharson when he messed with his fellow Chinese doctors, "Report 1928", 16/1/29, LMS Central China Reports Box 11; Mrs M. Anderson, "Annual Report 1931", 26/2/32, LMS Central China Reports Box 11.

this process but were keen to reaffirm it.<sup>171</sup> The LMS also adopted regularised official Chinese names for constituent bodies for the first time.<sup>172</sup> The 1921 Nurses Association of China Conference "consisted almost exclusively of foreign nurses, and English was the only language spoken, except for half a day (of the week) when Chinese was spoken". By 1930 with a majority of Chinese members Mandarin was on a par with English.<sup>173</sup> Such was the sensitivity over this issue that at the 1929 NCC Conference there were "signs of revolt... at the apparent "English language" domination of the report and findings" although the NCC was officially bilingual and Chinese texts, of minutes, were authoritative.<sup>174</sup> The accentuation of these linguistic demands defeated some candidates.<sup>175</sup> Accommodating the internal shift in institutional life towards educated Chinese activists also affected the style of Chinese learnt. John Foster of the WMMS developed "into a splendid preacher in [Cantonese]... his style is of the very modern student type."<sup>176</sup>

### New Relationships

Missionaries needed to redefine their relationship with their Chinese colleagues. The key elements of this relationship were their subordination to the Chinese Church, a new emphasis on racial equality (and thereby on "colleagueship"<sup>177</sup>) and a de-emphasising of the essential foreignness of missions. The latter, of course, involved certain practical difficulties. Although one strain of thought suggested that missionaries should renounce their nationality, this was not popular.<sup>178</sup> In general this de-emphasis

<sup>171</sup> W.W. Gibson to C.W. Andrews, 23/12/27, WMMSA Hunan fiche 212; "Canton Union Theological College. Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors Held in the College Library, 24th June, 1931" enclosed in C.D. Cousins to F.H. Hawkins, 24/6/31, LMS South China Box 26; "Minutes of Central Executive, Sixth Meeting, held at Tung Ch'wan, February 9-14, 1923", "Minutes of the Executive Committee of Sichuan Yearly Meeting Held at Suining, February 8th - 10th 1926"; the 1932 minutes were published in Chinese, *ibid.*, 1932, FSC CH/10; Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, pp.247-48.

<sup>172</sup> "Report of the 19th Annual Meeting of the China Council of the LMS for the Year 1929", p.7, in T. Cocker Brown to F.H. Hawkins, 17/4/29, LMS Central China Box 42.

<sup>173</sup> Miss Sharpe, "Annual Report 1930", LMS Central China Box 11.

<sup>174</sup> C.E. Wilson "China Reports", 20/5/29, BMSA CH/12; *National Christian Council of China Biennial Report 1929-31* (Shanghai, 1931), p.129.

<sup>175</sup> Despite his years on the NCC Ronald Rees "never really became fluent in Chinese", *Life in China*, p.21, Sewell Papers, SOAS PP MS 16/38; Arthur Whitmore to C.W. Andrews, 3/12/29, WMMSA South China fiche 592.

<sup>176</sup> A.W. Hooker to A.H. Bray, 31/3/30, WMMSA South China fiche 591.

<sup>177</sup> A.H. Bray to C.W. Andrews, 11/10/29, WMMSA South China fiche 590.

<sup>178</sup> H.H. Rowley to W.H. Payne, 11/7/27, BMSA CH/64; E.R. Hughes, "Annual Report 1927", 20/1/28, LMS China Fukien Reports Box 5. Some did take out Chinese nationality, however, such as Gladys Aylward, Burgess, *Small Woman*, p.104 and facing p.113.

meant their not relying on consuls and gunboats in relations and disputes with local Chinese authority.<sup>179</sup>

"Subordination" and "colleagueship" do appear to have been achieved by some; for example, "oneness" was said to have replaced "cordial relations" among the WMMS in South China.<sup>180</sup> Others rejected the former and concentrated on the latter fearing that subordination of the Mission to the Church was impractical and would reduce it ultimately to the impotent status of a fund raising and transmitting body.<sup>181</sup>

The new relationship raised practical difficulties. Indigenisation of control meant accelerating the employment of more Chinese in evangelical and pastoral positions. The CMS set up a new theological college for this reason in 1930, but Chinese evangelists were in short supply. It was considered by the Chinese to be a socially demeaning occupation, and paid too little, whilst graduates were "seriously out of touch with the kind of congregation to which they would be expected to minister".<sup>182</sup> This was a corollary of the usual problem faced by the missions, a problem that was growing more acute. The Chinese doctors and nurses they trained, and the graduates of their universities and theological colleges, were more likely to take work in China's urban centres rather than work for little remuneration for the missions. Theologically-dedicated Chinese graduates were also more likely to either prefer educational positions, or to seek work with Union organisations such as the NCC or the Chinese YMCA.<sup>183</sup>

Impatience with their new position left some observers nostalgic for their old authority, or else assuming that it would eventually return: "if China insists on Chinese

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<sup>179</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to A.W. Hooker, 12/12/29, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 400; [H.B. Rattenbury] "Memorandum", [March 1930], WMMSA Hupeh fiche 401.

<sup>180</sup> "A General Report of the South China District By the Chairman, January 1931", WMMSA Synod Minutes fiche 201.

<sup>181</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 28/3/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 389.

<sup>182</sup> Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.219, 281. See also W.G. Sewell's replies to a "China Study Area Questionnaire, May 1955", Sewell papers, SOAS PP MS 16/18; P.J. Maclagan to T.W.D. James, 31/1/29, EPMA Lingtung, Swatow, Box 43. This was, of course, a problem faced by that other group of intellectuals trying to reach the Chinese peasantry - the Chinese Communist Party, see, for example, the experiences of Peng Pai, Fernando Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai and the Hai Lu-feng Soviet* (Stanford, 1985), pp.92-96.

<sup>183</sup> Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.219. With the establishment of the Nationalist Government recruitment also began to become a problem for these Chinese institutions as well, Garrett, "The Chambers of Commerce and the YMCA", p.237. The LMS organised teams of Chinese evangelists in its Clarke Evangelical Bands but their practical results were as slight as those of the Chinese Home Missionary Society. The Roman Catholic Church also used Chinese missions "as the natural evolution of the missionary work", but its denial that this was merely a pragmatic response to political change which militated against foreign Catholic evangelism was hollow; "East China Clark Evangelistic Band Review of Work 1925-1934", LMS Home Personal Box 1; "The Chinese Christian Church Coming of Age", *IRM*, 20, No.79 (July 1931), p.357; *CCYB 1931*, p.130.

Principals she must suffer for it."<sup>184</sup> This they based on assumptions that the Chinese were, characteristically, not as self-sufficient or as strong as foreigners, especially Britons. They lacked "moral backbone" and the strength of a "Christian tradition" within a "heathen environment".<sup>185</sup> New missionaries who arrived expecting to assume traditional positions of authority in relation to the Chinese were either surprised or even disappointed.<sup>186</sup> One of the combination of factors leading to the quick resignation of Arthur Whitmore from the WMMS in 1929 was his disgust at the "second rate schoolmaster's job" he found waiting for him in China.<sup>187</sup>

This new relationship required patience and commitment on both sides. For the WMMS in the Hupeh District H.B. Rattenbury suggested mutual institutional restraints balancing his "occasionally... arbitrary" Chairmanship and an inexperienced Chinese Executive Committee. It certainly required equal treatment of foreign and Chinese workers by Church, Mission and Mission Boards.<sup>188</sup> The "comparative excitements and the abounding sociability of the old-time foreign "Local Committee"" gave way to Chinese-dominated synods which were "uninspired" and "a necessary evil."<sup>189</sup> The old ways did persist. Britons in the South China District of the WMMS met once a month "for a period of fellowship". The foreign staff at Lingnan University, Guangzhou, also continued to have a weekly meeting and in Hankou the WMMS held a weekly prayer meeting for "foreign workers only". The potential for this type of exclusive meeting to be misunderstood by Chinese co-workers was great.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 20/4/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 389; [H.B. Rattenbury] "Notes on an Address delivered at a gathering of Missionaries in St. John's Church, Hankow, June 6th, 1928", WMMSA Hupeh fiche 390; Jeannie Ewing to Miss M.M. Moore, 5/1/27, EPMA WMA Box 4. *China's Millions*, July 1925.

<sup>185</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 10/7/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 390; G.B. Barbour to F.H. Hawkins, 8/4/30, LMS North China Box 28; "Memorandum on the Opportunity for Service in the Chinese Church and the Need for Reinforcements for the Missionary Staff", in H.J.P. Anderson to Maclagan, 5/12/28, EPMA South Fukien Box 11.

<sup>186</sup> "Soon after my arrival here I was required to accompany my senior to a synod at one of our country centres, and to my great surprise - being a misguided and misinformed fresher - the meetings were all superintended not by a foreigner at all, but by a Chinese pastor, my friend and I sitting in an obscure (and draughty) corner... I did know so much, and was the more surprised to see a Chinese in a position of real authority", anon., "First Impressions of a Newcomer", *CR*, October 1931, p.613.

<sup>187</sup> Quoted in A.H. Bray to C.W. Andrews, 3/12/29, WMMSA South China fiche 590.

<sup>188</sup> H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 26/12/27, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 387; W.W. Gibson, circular letter, 27/2/28, WMMSA Hunan fiche 213.

<sup>189</sup> John Foster to C.W. Andrews, 14/2/29, WMMSA South China fiche 585.

<sup>190</sup> Hilda and William Sewell, journal letter, 9/12/28, FSC CH/5/4.

No amount of subordination to the Chinese Church, or integration with Chinese colleagues, circumvented the need most Britons felt for the company of their fellow nationals and, more importantly, the preference they felt for working with their fellow nationals. Certainly they were never allowed to forget their foreignness. There were continued anti-foreign demonstrations or instances in many places. In times of wider crisis, such as the general evacuation or the Nanjing incident, they were all British, and all foreign, together; and they were all, of course, still protected by extraterritoriality.<sup>191</sup>

### **Intellectual assessment of the Chinese Market**

The historical legacy of the opposition of the Chinese intelligentsia to Christianity was the focussing of missionary efforts on the countryside and the poor until the beginning of the century. This left the Churches with a "somewhat narrow" reputation which made it difficult for them to tap into the intellectual ferment in China's education represented by the May 4th Movement, or into the new world of the Chinese bourgeoisie.<sup>192</sup> An appeal to the educated Chinese could only be conducted through Christian literature in Chinese, but previous efforts to reproduce Chinese books were considered to be too narrowly didactic and lacking an awareness of "modern thinking and perplexities". The Christian Literature Society [CLS] was felt to have failed to produce a literature which would appeal to these Chinese groups; that is a literature "in Chinese with proper Chinese cultural background". It was stated, in fact, "that the imprint of the CLS is almost sufficient to kill the sale of a book."<sup>193</sup> Transferring the management to a Chinese board was one suggestion for dealing with the similar problems of the Religious Tracts Society. However, content not management was the problem. Literary work required that closer investigation and understanding of Chinese culture and society which E.R. Hughes and others felt the mission body had neglected. He and others set out to remedy this by working with the Chinese YMCA to create acceptable Chinese works in a Chinese style. Such work was also being produced at Yenching University.<sup>194</sup> Karl Reichelt's mission to the Buddhists, which did much to alter previously hostile Western

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<sup>191</sup> W.G. Sewell Circular Letter, 19/2/27, FSC CH/5/4; the Nanjing incident "even" made "good Quaker blood boil", W.G. Sewell Circular Letter, 28/4/27, FSC CH/5/4.

<sup>192</sup> John Foster, "Haigh College Report, Year 1928", WMMSA Synod Minutes 1928, fiche 196; J.D. Liddell, "Report for 1928", LMS Reports North China Box 10.

<sup>193</sup> C.W. Andrews to H.B. Rattenbury, 4/1/29, WMMSA Hupeh Correspondence, fiche 391; H.B. Rattenbury to A.W. Hooker, 11/2/30, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 400; A.L. Warnshuis to F.H. Hawkins, 19/6/31, LMS South China Box 26; C.G. Sparham to F.H. Hawkins, 17/10/28, enclosing David Z.T. Yui [YMCA] to C.G. Sparham, 8/10/28, LMS Central China Box 44; A.L. Warnshuis to F.H. Hawkins, 19/6/31, LMS South China Box 26.

<sup>194</sup> G.A. Clayton to A.W. Hooker, 22/2/30, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 398; E.R. Hughes "Annual Report 1931-2", LMS Central China Reports Box 11; J. Leighton Stuart to F.H. Hawkins, 17/9/31, LMS North China Box 29.



images of that religion, also set out to enlighten foreign missionaries.<sup>195</sup> Having attended a series of lectures William Sewell agreed with those who said "if only they had known of these things before they would never have been so destructive in their approach to Buddhism."<sup>196</sup> Also inspired by Reichelt, the CMS in Hangzhou set aside a building for contact with Buddhists.<sup>197</sup>

The same principle was applied to Chinese music and Chinese customs. Missionaries, like most foreigners, found themselves unable to appreciate Chinese music which they found "loud, discordant and piercing". Most ignored it; Edith S. Murray had been in China for nine years before she saw her first Chinese opera in 1931.<sup>198</sup> Others realised that attempts would have to be made to "sinify" hymn and psalm singing, which was "aggressively Western" in form, through the writing of Chinese hymns using Chinese music, and some progress was made.<sup>199</sup> The adaptation of Buddhist chants was suggested but many thought the whole exercise impossible and claimed that Chinese Christians would find the use of Chinese music "meretricious."<sup>200</sup> The CMS was involved with the CCC and others from 1931 to 1936 in the preparation of a *Union Hymnal* in which about an eighth of the tunes and hymns were Chinese.<sup>201</sup> Using Chinese opera was also considered. Crowds could certainly be drawn to plays in rural China although it was found difficult to convert such audiences.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968), pp.238-53. The most colourful, but probably least successful, proponent of Buddhism was, of course, the Abbot Chao Kung, better known as the Hungarian ex-Liberal MP and German spy, Ignatius Trebitsch Lincoln, Bernard Wasserstein, *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln* (revised edition, Harmondsworth, 1989), pp.274-99.

<sup>196</sup> W.G. Sewell, journal letter, 3/9/27, FSC CH5/4. Reichelt's approach was to build on themes purportedly held in common between the two religions, *ibid.*, and Eric J. Sharpe, *Karl Ludwig Reichelt: Missionary, Scholar and Pilgrim* (Hong Kong, 1984), *passim.*

<sup>197</sup> Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.275.

<sup>198</sup> Clements to Mrs May, 23/6/33, LMS China Personal Box 13; E.H.S. Murray, circular letter, 7/2/31, LMS Central China Box 11.

<sup>199</sup> T. Cocker Brown to F.H. Hawkins, 11/1/31, LMS Central China Box 46; W.F. Dawson to F.H. Hawkins, 22/1/31, LMS North China Box 27.

<sup>200</sup> "Report of the Survey Committee" enclosed in T. Cocker Brown to F.H. Hawkins, 9/3/31, LMS Central China, Box 46; There were other problems: "Mr Cheung wrote a new hymn for the opening of the Ying Wa Girls School extension. It was written to the tune "RULE BRITANNIA", C.D. Cousins to F.H. Hawkins, 31/1/31, LMS South China Box 26.

<sup>201</sup> Hewitt, *Problems of Success*, v.2, p.216.

<sup>202</sup> A.E. Small, "Report 1931", LMS Central China Reports Box 11; "East China Clark Evangelistic Band Review of Work 1925-1934", p.9, LMS Home Personal Box 1; there were other problems, Mr Geller caught "a severe chill... while watching the lepers act scenes from the life of Christ" while "the reason the prodigal left home was because he had a trying young wife" in one Chinese-acted biblical play, Mrs Geller to F.H.

Reaching an accommodation with indigenous customs and religion was also a prominent theme, as it had been since the first Jesuit missions and the "rites controversy".<sup>203</sup> Old-fashioned missionaries would still dismiss Confucianism as "backward looking and uninspiring" and Buddhism as "world-weary" or "a terrible admixture of devil worship, priestcraft, and empty ritual", but more liberal individuals were less dismissive. E.R. Hughes made an informal but symbolic pilgrimage to Qufu, birthplace of Confucius, in 1931.<sup>204</sup> The difficulties provided by the tenacity of local custom, however, had to be faced more pragmatically, W.H. Geller of the LMS suggested a special Christian service to be held on the Chinese festival of *Qingming*, "giving thanks for Parents, Teachers, Heroes, Patriots and the like," to coopt some of the strength of such customs. The "mental attitudes" involved were considered to be of potentially "great value." More honestly it was admitted that abolishing the veneration of ancestors constituted "an obstacle to people desiring to adopt the Christian faith".<sup>205</sup> It also left missions open to the charge that they cut off Chinese Christians from Chinese national life and deracinated them.<sup>206</sup> The debate on the possibility of reaching a compromise on this topic was a perennial topic in the *Chinese Recorder*.<sup>207</sup>

A greater problem was presented by Chinese folk religion, elements of which occasionally fused into fundamentalist Protestantism. Speaking in tongues and demon possession gripped even the bible-women in one North China village leaving the villagers "more superstitious than ever" and causing a break in relations with the LMS mission.<sup>208</sup>

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Hawkins, 27/12/30, LMS Central China Box 48; Winifred Brown, circular letter, 29/12/30, WMMSA WW Hupeh fiche 127.

<sup>203</sup> On the history of the question see George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy from its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago, 1985).

<sup>204</sup> "Report on the Work of F.G. Onley during 1930", LMS Central China Reports Box 11; F.J. Griffith, "The Mission to the Mongols, 15/9/29", Scott papers; E.R. Hughes, "Annual Report 1931-2", LMS Central China Reports, Box 11.

<sup>205</sup> Geller, "Decennial report 1930", LMS Central China Reports Box 11; "Minutes of the Standing Committee of China Council of the LMS, Hankow, 18,19,24/5/31" in T. Cocker Brown to F.H. Hawkins, 28/5/31, LMS Central China Box 46; *Veneration of Ancestors: recommendations of the East China Conference or Leaders of the Christianising the Home Movement*, p.1, enclosure in H.B. Rattenbury to W.A. Grist, 11/2/31, WMMSA Hupeh. Some customs could not be accommodated. In January 1930 Hunanese methodist Church officers were ordered to release their "girl slaves" within two months, "Minutes of a Meeting of the Missionaries of the Hunan District Held at Changsha on Wednesday 14th January 1930", WMMSA Hunan fiche 204.

<sup>206</sup> E.M. Bolton to Miss Hunter, 1/1/27, WMMSA WW Hupeh fiche 122; Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, p.136; this was, of course, stated Roman Catholic policy, *CCYB* 1929, pp.235-36.

<sup>207</sup> For Rawlinson's special interest in the issue (he chaired a seminar on it in 1927) see Rawlinson, *Rawlinson*, pp.576-78.

<sup>208</sup> Edith S. Murray, "Annual Report", 1928, 19/2/29, LMS North China Box 10.

In a similar way, BAT and Swires started their advertising in China with European scenes and figures, but soon came to realise that the best way to approach the Chinese market was through Chinese scenes and figures recognisable to Chinese customers.<sup>209</sup> In missions and in businesses there were those who failed to realise the value of sinified packaging of their products, and some who objected on principle.<sup>210</sup>

Much of this reform of presentation grew out of the wider trends in Mission thinking represented by the 1928 Jerusalem Meeting and the ongoing debate about indigenisation. In general, however, it represented another facet of the dismantling of the "aggressively Western" characteristics of Missions and their Churches. It signalled a change in attitudes from the contemptuous dismissal symbolised by *The Christian Occupation of China* to a greater understanding of the integrity of Chinese custom and culture.

The result of this sinification was that missionaries found themselves generally working with, rather than over, Chinese Christians - in union organisations, in churches, and in mission institutions, and listening at last, rather than dictating, to them.<sup>211</sup> It has been shown that this was not an easy change for some to make, that the Chinese were often portrayed as being unready for new responsibilities and insecure in their new posts. Nevertheless many missionaries found the new situation satisfying. Although mission societies, by continuing to exist, still in fact kept the financial structures and the nature of mission intact, the character of the mission enterprise had been changed drastically.

## V Conclusion

### Missions and British images of China

Missionaries, with good reason, were key mediators of images and information about China to the British public. Their changing perceptions of their own relations with Chinese Christians and Chinese society were also reflected in their propaganda and in the conscious efforts of some individuals to improve Sino-British relations. The efforts of E.R. Hughes have been noted in chapter 4. The logic of his intellectual development led him to return to Britain to a full-time academic career, although he continued to work to improve Sino-British cultural and social relations.<sup>212</sup> Others also became important

<sup>209</sup> Cochran, *Big Business*, pp.35-38; JS London to BS Hong Kong (Taikoo Sugar Refinery), 26/7/29, JSS V 1/2a.

<sup>210</sup> See G.W. Swire's comments on BS Hong Kong to JS London, 22/11/29, JSS III 1/7; the Roman Catholic Church forbade any compromise whatsoever with indigenous heathen customs at its 1st Plenary Council in China in 1924, *CCYB 1929*, p.236.

<sup>211</sup> H.T. Hodgkin, "Wanted - Listeners", *NCC Bulletin*, No.11 October 1924, CBMSA E/T China 4.

<sup>212</sup> Although superficially one of the last of the old-breed of missionary sinologists he was actually one of the first of the new breed, see for example, the files in the Bodleian

advocates of more informed and sensitive approaches to China, such as Henry Hodgkin of the National Christian Council of China.<sup>213</sup> After 1937 the Sino-Japanese war prompted a pro-Chinese campaign although many missionaries had started stating China's case in 1931-32.<sup>214</sup> The dictates of the anti-axis alliance after 1941 further fuelled this campaign, in such writings as those of H.B. Rattenbury, a late convert to the Nationalist cause.<sup>215</sup>

It is clear that, like the British business community, missions were prompted by the Nationalist Revolution into overhauling their staff, structures and attitudes. The political shock was very great. The anti-Christian assault also shocked mission societies into modernising themselves in response to Chinese social change. The Chinese bourgeoisie was not, historically, the target of the mission enterprise, nor was it easy to approach, but it became clear that, to stay in China, it would have to be accommodated, if not targeted.<sup>216</sup> Missionaries appear to have disliked this class as much as British businessmen, but it was no longer realistic to order business on such likes and dislikes.<sup>217</sup> The conversion of Jiang Jieshi and the Christian beliefs of his wife, her sister, and other prominent members of the National Government, were symbolic of the high-profile Christianity had in Nationalist China.<sup>218</sup> This high profile could only benefit missions if they modernised themselves and their attitudes sufficiently.

Modernization meant that secular functions carried out by mission institutions were even more integrated into local life, or else were too complicated to be carried out without employing educated Chinese staff or attempting to get Chinese funds, either institutionally, as in the EPM's Shantou hospital, or individually from wealthy patients or parents.<sup>219</sup>

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library on his organisational work to maintain and expand academic links between Oxford, especially, and China during the Sino-Japanese and Pacific wars.

<sup>213</sup> Hodgkin's role and influence is partly the subject of the as yet uncompleted research of R.M.B. West on British missionaries and the Nationalist Revolution.

<sup>214</sup> See, for example, Hughes' letter to Lionel Curtis of 2/2/32 in Curtis papers, Mss. Curtis 5, Bodleian library.

<sup>215</sup> For Rattenbury's works see, for example, *Understanding China*, China (London, 1942), *My China* (London, 1944) and *Face to Face with China* (London, 1945). Rattenbury's daughter was Arthur Clegg's typist at the China Campaign Committee office and his second wife was a committee member, Clegg, *Aid China 1937-1949: A Memoir of a Forgotten Campaign* (Beijing, 1989), p.56. The extent of missionary and church involvement in the Aid China Campaign can be gleaned from *ibid.*, *passim.*

<sup>216</sup> J.D. Liddell, "Report for 1928", LMS North China Reports Box 10.

<sup>217</sup> "The Chinese Compradore class tends to swarm all over [Guling], which possibly, from the original point of view of a health resort, will not have the best effects," H.B. Rattenbury to C.W. Andrews, 10/8/28, WMMSA Hupeh fiche 390.

<sup>218</sup> Garrett, "Chambers of Commerce and the YMCA", p.237.

<sup>219</sup> A by-product of the modern mission work-load was the lack of "time for specialised literary studies such as two generations ago nearly every missionary was able

Like businesses the missions - to stay put - had to get and keep friends in the Chinese establishment and in related institutions. Unlike Chinese companies many of these institutions (such as the NCC and the Chinese YMCA) were only in the early days of independence or semi-independence, from foreign control. This process was accelerated by the political situation after the May 30th incident. Like businessmen, missionaries had to prove that their community of interest with these Chinese organisations was strong - both in terms of their ultimate objectives and also defensively, by the fact that both were threatened by any disunity and by central government *diktat*. It was also recognised that this new government and its bureaucracy, significantly staffed by returned students and open Christians, was approachable directly and via the Chinese Christian organisations. The relationship was one of interdependence. In December 1931, for example, in a foretaste of the *Guomindang* propaganda campaign during the Pacific War, Jiang Jieshi met Church and mission representatives and asked them for their support during the Manchurian crisis.<sup>220</sup> Like businessmen, missionaries had to tailor their organisation and services to the demands of social change which were self-evident in the society of Nationalist China. Their pre-revolutionary response to these changes had been complacently slow. This slowness had helped fuel the fury shown by some Chinese Christians towards the foreign missions. Like businessmen they also had to show both that they were aware of what were now perceived as the injustices of the past, and that "conspicuous grievances" had been dealt with.

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to pursue; and I suppose the long tradition of missionary occupation of Chinese University chairs at home will come to an end", A.H. Jowett Murray to F.H. Hawkins, 19/10/30, LMS North China Box 29.

<sup>220</sup> R. Rees to Mr MacLennan, 2/12/31, WMMSA South China fiche 593. On the propaganda campaign see Isaacs, *Scratches*, pp.161-62, 164-76.

## Conclusion

### I

It is clear then, that the attitudes towards the Chinese of the most "representative" Britons, those living and working in the treaty ports of China, were a tangible problem in the later 1920s. They were not peripheral to the major themes identifiable in British responses to the triumph of the *Guomindang* but played a central role in those debates. These attitudes were propagated through the structures of treaty port life and business, and through the propaganda of the treaty port experts which built on prevailing imperialist and racist attitudes, including those transmitted through fictional media. The construct of China and the Chinese that was transmitted served to legitimise the informally colonial *status quo* that existed until 1927. It was used to defend that situation after 1927 and characterised, as far as it was practicable, the compromises worked out thereafter in many areas of treaty port life and business. It also characterised the die-hardness of opponents of reform such as the BRA.

The reform of British attitudes was the target, often implicit, of many of the changes initiated in businesses, missions and in the concessions after 1927. It was predicated on the dismantling of the structures of colonialism and the disabusing of the settler mentality of treaty port Britons. It involved changing employment patterns, socialising patterns, the question of language learning and all the other myriad facets of intercourse with Chinese competitors, colleagues, employees, customers and authorities.

This reform was initiated by a variety of individuals, mostly acting autonomously within their own communities but often aware, like E.R. Hughes, of circumstances in other areas of treaty port life. The British Legation under the guidance of the Foreign Office was responsible for initiating reform where it could and encouraging it in other sectors. Mostly however, similar patterns of reform originated as a result of similar

patterns of dysfunctional relationships with the Chinese in different British communities and the shared experience and shock of 1927 and the triumph of Chinese nationalism.

The reform process involved the comprehensive erosion of the position of the treaty port experts and community leaders as arbiters of knowledge and discourse about China and the Chinese. There were new pragmatic leaders in the big British companies, who did not share the colonialist assumptions of their predecessors or, quite frequently, their own staff. The Legation and the Foreign Office insisted on the primacy of wider issues in Sino-British relations than those which concerned the treaty port communities. Lampson and his successors were career ambassadors who were not unduly influenced by the treaty port atmosphere, as had been, for example, his predecessor, Sir Ronald Macleay; they were also less autonomous and their views less deferred to by the Foreign Office, than had previously been the case.<sup>1</sup>

It is not therefore surprising that the treaty port British huddled together in the BRA after 1931 and attempted to by-pass the Legation and the Foreign Office and take their case directly to British politicians and the public. It is also not surprising that it is the years of friction with the Japanese, the Pacific War, and the experience of internment to which they accord much greater retrospective importance to than the years before 1931 in their memoirs and in their histories of Shanghai.<sup>2</sup> The shrillness of treaty port politics accompanied the noticeably greater shrillness of tone in the later works of the treaty port commentators.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On Macleay see Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, pp.92-93.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Collar, *Captive in Shanghai*, *passim.*; Finch, *Shanghai and Beyond*, *passim.*; J.V. Davidson-Houston, *Yellow Creek: The Story of Shanghai* (London, 1961), pp.138-87.

<sup>3</sup> "People like Sir Reginald Johnston who are practically Chinese... have loved and known China from end to end... (even think in Chinese)... are disillusioned altogether - cannot find and scarcely believe in now, the China that they loved -... all their memories are spoilt and blotted by the maniac present", Stella Benson to Stephen Hudson, 15/7/30,

This necessity of modernising attitudes was intimately linked with reforms spurred by other economic and social trends. The growth of nationalism and the Chinese bourgeoisie, the threat of economic nationalism and the modernisation of Chinese commerce required the adoption of new business priorities which amounted to a sinification of the British presence in China. Competition from the United States, Germany and Japan also spurred on the abandonment of traditional practices and routines. In general terms a similar compromise had to be attempted by British missions, which were forced to match more closely the theory and practice of mission in order to survive in China.

## II

On September 18th 1931 officers of the Japanese Kwantung army exploded a small bomb on the South Manchurian Railway near Mukden (Shenyang). Denounced as the work of Chinese saboteurs it provided a pretext, quickly seized, for the spiralling conflict which saw the Japanese conquest of Manchuria and, from January to March 1932, fierce fighting in Shanghai.<sup>4</sup> The warfare saw the suspension of the extraterritoriality negotiations then underway between Britain and China, which were not actively resumed until the very different circumstances of 1942-43, when both countries were allied against Japan.<sup>5</sup>

From 1931 onwards the immediate political pressures on Britons in China to reform their relations with the Chinese were eased. In a sense the necessity of change became irrelevant as the focus of Chinese, and world, attention began to switch towards

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BL Add. Mss. 52916, Schiff Papers. For Bland the title of his last book is evidence enough, *China: The Pity of It*.

<sup>4</sup> Eastman, "Nationalist China during the Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945", Eastman, et al., *Nationalist Era*, pp.115-24; Thorne, *Limits of Foreign Policy*, pp.204-10.

<sup>5</sup> Fishel, *End of Extraterritoriality in China*, pp.186-87, 207-15.



Japanese actions and designs, although the economic and social pressures remained. Echoes of the response to the Nationalist Revolution continued, however, to reverberate. When M.W. Scott arrived in Hong Kong in 1934 to work for Swires he was met at the quayside not by fellow Britons from the Butterfield and Swire office, nor by the sight of "sinister" coolies at work, but by J.C.L. Wong. Wong was a British educated product of Swires' slow commitment to sinification. It was one small way in which the structure of socialisation of Britons in the treaty port communities was changing and continued to change.<sup>6</sup>

Many Britons in the treaty ports, such as SMC councillor A.D. Bell, were sympathetic to, or supported, Japan's actions.<sup>7</sup> They saw Japan as acting strongly to protect her interests in a way that contrasted favourably with their own "betrayal" by the British Government. Betrayal was sometimes personally felt. A.H.F. Edwardes, for example, vilified by the Nationalists during the contest for the CMC inspector-generalship in 1929, became an adviser to Manzhouguo and later to the Japanese embassy in London.<sup>8</sup> Where the British authorities had opened negotiations on the future of extraterritoriality and the status of the treaty ports, discussions which mocked the imperial pretensions of British residents, the Japanese had dealt in a strong, imperialist, manner with the Chinese. In fact hostility to China served, at least initially, to hamper the perception of the extent of the Japanese threat to British interests in China, even within the Legation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Scott papers, Letter to parents, 11/2/34.

<sup>7</sup> A.D. Bell to Lionel Curtis, 9/2/32, Curtis papers, Mss. Curtis 5.

<sup>8</sup> Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise*, pp.74-77, 83-84.

<sup>9</sup> Reports and analyses of both the assassination of Zhang Zoulin in 1928 and the Jinan incident later that same year, were distorted by anti-bolshevism, anti-nationalism, and contempt for Chinese abilities. Any understanding of Japanese involvement or intentions in these cases was obscured. See the files on the killing of Zhang in FO228\3711 2 and FO228\3712 2. Lampson did not believe "for a moment" claims of Japanese involvement and the only foreign voice which did subscribe to that truthful

This attitude started to change as the Japanese began to threaten British interests in China. The full-scale Sino-Japanese war which began in 1937 saw a concerted Japanese effort to erode or seize other foreign interests, especially in Tianjin and Shanghai. The SMC in particular became the target of a fierce struggle for control of the International Settlement which saw electoral gerrymandering and assassination attempts against British policemen and councillors.<sup>10</sup> British businesses also came under attack from Japanese sponsored strikes and the blockade of Tianjin in 1939.<sup>11</sup>

By December 1941, when Japan declared war on Britain, "China" had effectively been rehabilitated. Moscow's xenophobic, queue-wearing puppets had been replaced in British popular perceptions by the doughty patriots of the 19th Route Army in Shanghai, brave resisters of a militarily superior aggressor. Jiang Jieshi had made the transition from "Red" general to Christian patriot. This revision of the construct of China dominant in Britain had several sources but mostly it resulted from the supersession of the treaty port dominance of the discourse on China. Just as the settler mentality and its supporting structures of socialisation had been attacked in British businesses, missions and concessions, so the monopoly of expert opinion held by the treaty port China experts was

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theory did so because "the outrage was too accurately planned to have been done by a Chinese", Lampson minute on a letter from a "Mukden resident", 5/6/28, FO228\3711\337 2; Dairen No.30, 13/6/28, FO228\3712\387 2. On the Jinan incident see Legation dossier 25L 1928.

<sup>10</sup> In 1940 both the head of the SMP's Special Branch and the SMC Commissioner General survived assassination attempts. The following year W.J. Keswick, Chairman of the SMC was shot and wounded by the president of the Japanese Ratepayers' Association, *NCH*, 17/1/40, p.92; 11/9/40, p.407; Davidson-Houston, *Yellow Creek*, pp.163-65, 168-69.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, *Shanghai and Tientsin*, pp.62-71, 172-80. One such strike was that at the China Printing and Finishing Company in Pudong, Shanghai, in May-June 1939, NARA SMP D863055.

also attacked in the British and world press. Their works, which had once been aggressively justificatory became elegiacally so during the Pacific War and thereafter.<sup>12</sup>

The period of the Nationalist Revolution saw the beginning of this erosion of the authority of the treaty port experts. The sheer scale of the foreign media attention that was focussed on China after 1925 but especially in 1927 was influential. From 1931 onwards this attention increased and new constructs of "China" and the "Chinese" evolved. Early on press coverage was sympathetic to abstract notions of Chinese nationalism and discredited the treaty port writers whose strong conservatism in the face of the revolution undermined their authority with many.<sup>13</sup> After 1931 it was increasingly anti-Japanese. Some writers and reporters deliberately set out to improve the picture by attacking old preconceptions.<sup>14</sup> A different "expert" community became active in China, it was left-wing, and journalistic, and mostly American. It replaced one community of interest, the expatriate opinion-formers, with another, often political in origin and loyalty. Some represented active political interests, such as Agnes Smedley [in China from 1930] and Harold Isaacs [1930] who both worked with the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>15</sup> Others

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Green's *The Foreigner in China*, *passim*.; ex-SDF officer turned Shanghai resident Davidson-Houston's *Yellow Creek* is dedicated "To the Men from the West who built Asia's Greatest City". See also John Pal, *Shanghai Saga* (London, 1963) and Finch, *Shanghai and Beyond*, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> Of Gilbert the US Consul-General wrote: "Toward the end of 1925 his opinions became very drastic and during recent months his views have not been regarded as very sound because he appeared to be a leader in the "die-hard" class", E.S. Cunningham to J.V.A. MacMurray, 2/3/29, No.5873, NARA RG 84 Shanghai Post Files 891, 1929.

<sup>14</sup> There were ripostes to die-hard diatribes, such as O.D. Rasmussen's *What's Right With China* aimed at "misanthropic morons" like Gilbert, which countered criticisms with a politically structured critique of Western activities in China (Shanghai, 1927, p.xiii.). There were also attacks on Gilbert's racial assumptions such as Paul Monroe, *China: A Nation in Evolution* (New York, 1928), pp.394-402.

<sup>15</sup> J.R. Mackinnon and S.R. Mackinnon, *Agnes Smedley: The Life and Times of an American Radical* (London, 1988), pp.134-59, afterwards *passim*.; Smedley in fact attempted to join the Chinese Communist Party in 1933, *ibid.*, pp.186-87; H. Isaacs, *Re-encounters in China: Notes on a Journey in a Time Capsule* (Armonk, New York, 1985), *passim*.

were more broadly pro-Chinese, such as Edgar Snow [1928] or Emily Hahn [1935].<sup>16</sup> All of them were influential and very critical of the foreign communities in China.<sup>17</sup> They added serious weight to the more salacious portrayals of foreign life in China, that enjoyed a vogue in the 1930s and served to undermine it.<sup>18</sup> There was also a small, but growing, number of Chinese writers, notably Lin Yutang, who enjoyed a great deal of popularity in the 1930s, and Chiang Yee [Jiang Yi].<sup>19</sup> It is clear that the works of Lin and Pearl Buck substantially contributed to the sinophilia evident in the 1930s and 1940s. Both books were largely *Chinese Characteristics* writ newly, and more sympathetically, and were used as such.<sup>20</sup> Active propaganda efforts on China's behalf after 1937, such as those of the China Campaign Committee, reinforced this influence.<sup>21</sup>

The establishment of the National Government in Nanjing in 1928 gave China a recognisable centre for the first time since 1911 and so undermined one of the assumptions of the past two decades of analysis. Chinese nationalists and government representatives were also more assertive and active in combatting foreign views they saw as offensive (with the "drastic, autocratic ruthlessness characteristic of Oriental

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<sup>16</sup> On Snow see J.M. Hamilton, *Edgar Snow: A Biography* (Bloomington, 1988). For Hahn's account see *China To Me* (Philadelphia, 1944).

<sup>17</sup> For an example of Snow's journalism see his article on "The Americans in Shanghai", *American Mercury*, 20, No.80 (August 1930), pp.437-45.

<sup>18</sup> Such works included Kisch, *Secret China*; Miller, *Shanghai: Paradise of Adventurers*; Hauser, *Shanghai: City for Sale*; Peters, *Shanghai Policeman* and Fontenoy, *Secret Shanghai*.

<sup>19</sup> Lin's works included the very successful *My Country and My People* (London, 1936), *The Importance of Living* (London, 1938) and a series of propagandist novels and commentaries. Chiang's self-illustrated travel and childrens' books and works on Chinese painting enjoyed a great deal of popularity in the nineteen thirties, forties and fifties. Like Lin he also published translations of Chinese works.

<sup>20</sup> For the influence of the books see Isaacs, *Scratches*, pp.155-58. Buck wrote the introduction for Lin's book.

<sup>21</sup> On the campaign see Clegg, *Aid China*, *passim*..

despotism" wrote Bland).<sup>22</sup> An increasing tendency to object successfully to negative portrayals on screen and stage has already been noted.

The murder of Bertram Lenox Simpson in 1930, after his involvement in the Tianjin Customs crisis, marked the end of an era in which the China experts had dabbled in Chinese politics and felt personally invulnerable because of their disinterested distance and British status. This was felt by the wider community as well which until the Nationalist Revolution had considered itself safe from the fallout of events in China. As the Sino-Japanese conflict intensified the traditional security and insulation of Britons in China vanished.

There was also throughout the interwar period a slowly growing professionalization in Chinese studies, especially in the United States but more slowly in Britain.<sup>23</sup> Much of this work was involved with reassessing the history of foreign relations with China. Before 1928 this had mostly been a subject left to the treaty port propagandists and scholars. In the 1930s it began to become a topic for serious and objective research. J.K. Fairbank investigated British consular archives *in situ* and indeed the assessment of the size and historical value of consular archives in China was one of the tasks of the peripatetic Inspector General of Consulates in 1928-29. A sense that this was the beginning of a time of historical reflection was evident.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bland, *China: The Pity of It*, p.156. As has been noted, in 1933, prompted by Chinese complaints, the Foreign Office was instrumental in getting Mrs C.K. Chesterton's *Young China and New Japan* withdrawn from sale because of libels about Jiang Jieshi. H.F. MacNair's condensation of Morse's *International Relations of the Chinese Empire* had been withdrawn earlier because of political objections to descriptions of the events of 1926-27, Morse and MacNair, *Far Eastern International Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1931), Preface, pp.viii-x.

<sup>23</sup> Barrett, *Singular Listlessness*, pp.92-101. Two of the major academics/publicists of the post-war period, Owen Lattimore and John King Fairbank, were working and studying in China at this time, see Lattimore, *China Memoirs* (London, 1991), *passim.*, and Fairbank, *Chinabound*, pp.35-150.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Hughes, *Invasion of China by the Western World*; G.F. Hudson, *Europe and China: A Survey of their Relations from the earliest times to 1800* (London,

Mary G. Mason began her research on Western attitudes to China before 1934 while Harold Isaacs, later to write *Scratches On Our Minds*, was living and working in Shanghai in the same decade.<sup>25</sup> In this period when British attitudes to China were under severe scrutiny and had become the target of reform they also became, for the first time, a topic for objective academic historical study.

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1931). For the consular inspections see the reports by Herbert Philips in FO369\2018-2021, FO369\2705 *passim*..

<sup>25</sup> Mary G. Mason began her research before 1934, Mason, *Western Concepts of China and the Chinese*, p.ix. See also Xiao Qian's [Hsiao Ch'ien] later compilation of Western writings on China *Harp with a Thousand Strings* (London, 1944).

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Talks Scripts, 1928-1931

Programme Script:-*The Lion And The Dragon* (1/LDF/j510L)  
Transmitted 8/10/84 and 15/10/84  
Interview Transcripts: *The Lion And The Dragon*::-

Anderson, M.	Born in Shanghai
Arnold, M.	Brought up in Shanghai
Caulton, B.	KMA (Brought up in China)
Gill, L.	SMP (1929 onwards)
Lister, Maurice	BAT (China, 1929-1939)
Lyall, Mr and Mrs L.T.	CIM (1929 onwards)
Marchant, Cmdr.	RN (China Station)
May, Rev F.	Born in China
Norman, Colonel	Army (Language Student, Beijing Legation)
Phillips, F.	RN (China Station)
Shaw, A.,	Brought up in China
Sinclair, J.A.	Consular Service
Temlett, Mr and Mrs	CMC

### **British Library, Manuscripts Department**

Stella Benson Papers  
Lord Chamberlain's Department, Papers and Plays  
Macmillan and Co., Archive, Letters of Stella Benson and B. L. Simpson  
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Diaries of Stella Benson

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Missionary Correspondence

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Papers of the Inchcape Group: Dodwell and Co., Ltd.

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SHG II 551	Peking Letter Book 1924-1931
S16.1	Personalities and Narratives
LOH I 103.243-250	Semi-Official Letters from Shanghai, 1928-1931
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Andrewes, W.	RN (China Station, 1925-1926)
Barraclough, E.M.C.	RN (Born in Shanghai, 1893 and served on the China Station)
Boreham, A.C.	Army (SDF, 1926-1928)
Boxall, N.W.J.	Army (Shanghai, 1931-1933)
Boyes, G.N.W.	RN (China Station, 1925-1927)
Brock, P.W.	RN (China Station, 1927-1928)
Bunter, F.W.	Army (Weihaiwei, 1926-1927)
Clouston, W.S.	RN (China Station, 1927-1928)
Drage, C.H.	RN (China Station, 1923-1925)
Duck, Mrs Isabel	Secretary, SMC doctor's wife, 1925-1945
Field, L.F.	Army (Language Student 1922, SDF, 1927, North China Command, 1927-1932)
Hayes, J.O.C.	RN (China Station, 1931-1932)
Hilken, T.J.N.	RN (China Station, 1929-1931)
Jervois, J.A.	Army (Deputy Assistant Provost Marshall, SDF, 1927)
Lees, E.V.	RN (China Station, 1927)
Longley-Cook, E.W.	RN (China Station, 1927)
March, J.E.	Architect, Shanghai, 1926-1945
Moneypenny, Mr	APC (China, 1924-1931)
Philips, J.M.	APC (China, 1924-1926)
Philips, O.W.	RN (China Station, 1920s)
Pollard, A.R.E.	Army (Shanghai, 1932)
Roberts, W.G.	RN (China Station, 1923-1925)
Robertshaw, B.	RN (China Station, 1925-1927)
Robinson, F.	Army (Tianjin, 1925-1928)



Roper, E.J.	Prison Warder, Shanghai Municipal Prison, 1930-1935, Assistant Executioner, 1935-1941)
Scott, W.F.	RN (China Station, 1926-1927)
Simms, H.C.	RN (1924-19288)
Starling, E.B.	Nanny (to Consul's Son, Weihaiwei, 1937-1938)
Tinkler, R.M.	SMP (1919-1930, Security officer, China Printing and Finishing Company, Shanghai until 1939)
Tregear, F.M.W.	Army (Hong Kong, 1926-1930, Guangzhou, 1927)
Walsham, J.S.	Army (SDF, 1927)

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 Whyte, Sir Frederick, Diaries  
 L/MIL/17/20/6  
 L/PS/10  
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 L/PS/12

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 Grohman, H.T. Baillie, Papers (Senior Officer, British Naval Mission to China, 1931-33)  
 Hamilton, Sir L.H.K., Papers (China Station, 1927-1928)  
 Kelly, Sir W.A.H., Papers (Commander in Chief, China Station, 1931-33)  
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